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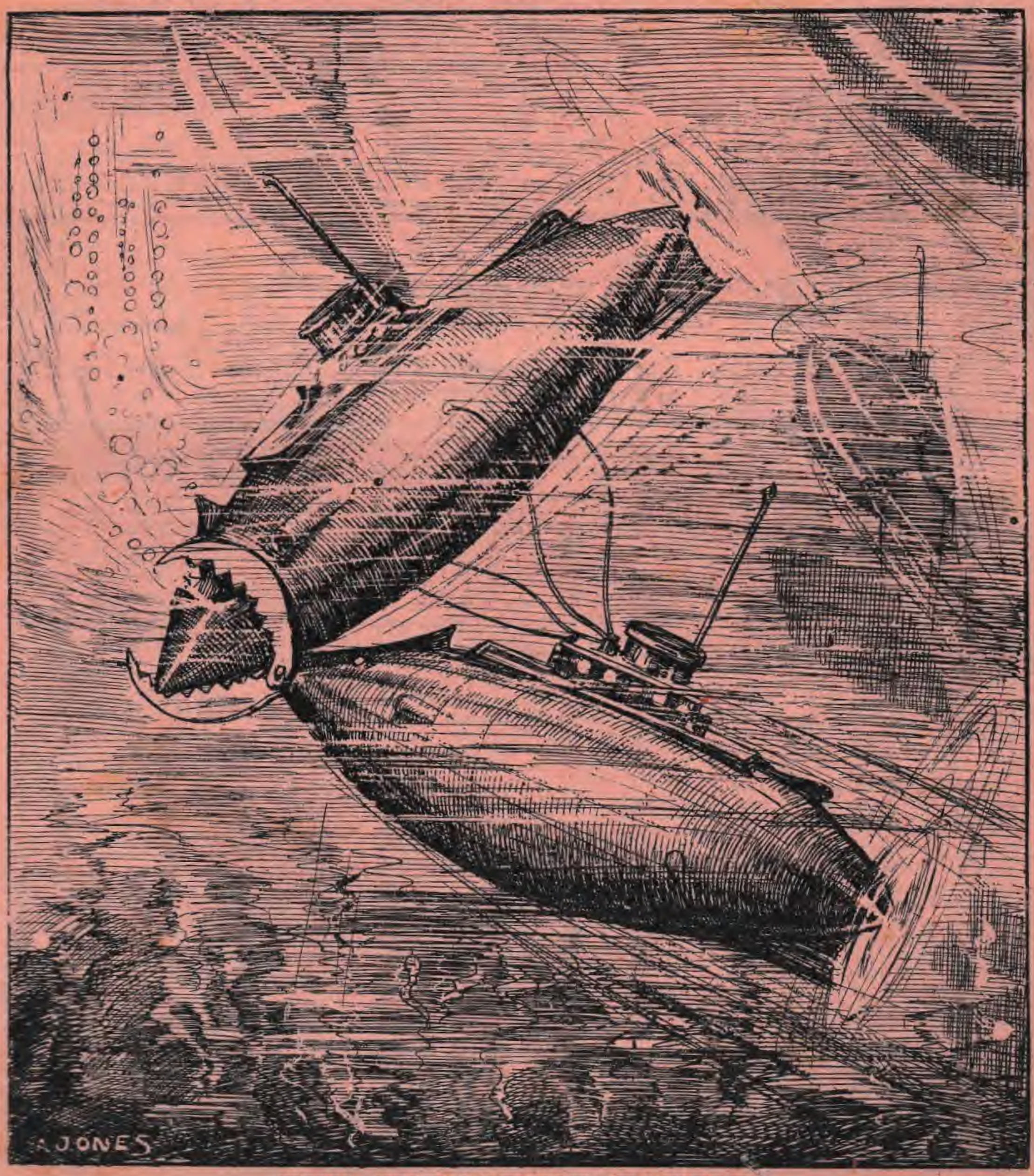

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The Bullies of St. Claire.

Our Magnificent New Story of School Life and Adventure.

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By HENRY T. JOHNSON.

MAKE FRIENDS AT ONCE WITH—

JACK STIRLING, a new boy at St. Claire's.

CURZON CURSITOR CUST, also a new boy, of very aristocratic parentage.

"CHICK" MULLINS, another new boy, and one of the best. Chick is proud of the fact that his people made their money out of the "greenstuff line" in the East End.

These three newcomers to St. Claire's are sworn friends, and, finding that the once famous school has fallen into a bad state, they resolve to make a stand against the bullies who are ruling the roost.

BINKIE, otherwise the Weakling, is a delicate lad who has suffered much at the hands of PONTIFEX and STIBBALD, the chief bullies. Our three newcomers hold

a classroom battle

in defence of the Weakling, and score a famous victory.

Pontifex and Stibbald try to avenge themselves by stealing the new boys' hampers; but the chums score again by harmlessly "doctoring" a pie beforehand, so that the thieves are seized with dreadful pains in the night.

(Now go on with this week's splendid instalment.)

CHAPTER IV.

Morning "Ducker."—Ezra Crabbe's Secret.

The next morning was productive of a sensation of another kind.

After so terrible a night there was a remarkably slack attendance at "early ducker." Only such as held, or were in hopes of holding, swimming colours, turned out for a run towards the open-air swimming-bath, one of the few well-appointed institutions at St. Claire's.

The three new fellows were there, and Chandos, captain of Lower School, intently watched them emerge from their dressing-boxes, and wondered were they good, bad, or indifferent.

There was room for good men in the second team. The first, of course, were absolutely top-hole. There was Transom, their hundred-yards flier, just about to start on a two-lengths' spin, which would, no doubt, impress the trio of new-comers.

That Transom himself thought so was, to a keen observer, obvious from the satisfied air with which he regarded the company in general, and the supercilious look he bestowed on the "new kids" in particular, as who should say:

"You chaps have never seen real swimming yet; now you are going to."

He mounted the lower board, extended his arms, and went in like a streak of white. A moment later he was up and ploughing his way down the bath with powerful trudgeon strokes.

Chick Mullins then mounted the board.

"What stroke do you use?" Chandos inquired, somewhat haughtily, with the air of one who had to be civil to a certain extent.

"Well," chirped Chick Mullins, "as far as I know, my stroke ain't got no right name of its own. But I calls it the "Kipper" stroke. Jes' watch!"

As he spoke he dived, and they noticed he scarcely went two feet deep. He was up again in a flash, and driving along with a quaint, jerky stroke that seemed to combine a bit of every other stroke known to swimmers, yet had one or two features of its own that they could not absolutely define.

But he could travel—there was no doubt as to that. Watching him, they noted that whereas Transom was twenty yards down the pool when Chick dived, Transom reached the end considerably less than twenty yards ahead, and Chick, with that jerky, nondescript stroke, was still gaining on him.

Then the lankly form of Curzon Cursitor Cust flung itself flatly and with a flop from the board.

"Can't dive for toffee!" scoffed the onlookers; which was undoubtedly true.

But C. C. C. could swim, and he could swim with pace and strength. His long arms, whirling round like mill-sails, sent up fountains of foam. He blew like a grampus, and the wonder was that he did not tire himself out in a dozen strokes.

But he didn't, and it was soon apparent that, with all his awkwardness, he was gaining on Chick Mullins, who was likewise gaining on Transom.

"Two of the ugliest swimmers I've ever seen," said Chandos. "But they're going into my reserve team this moment, and before I've had 'em very long in hand they'll get their first team colours, and help us to put it on Crawley."

For to defeat Crawley College was the, till then, hopeless ambition of every skipper of the St. Claire's Ducker Team—an ambition that had never been realised after a series of annual attempts extending over twenty years.

Chandos roused himself from his meditations to watch the third of the trio as he mounted the board and shaped to spring, wondering if he was going to be as awkward as the others, or as fast.

Not as awkward. Jack Stirling set that doubt at rest in a flash with as clean and swift a plunge as one could wish to see. Then he lashed out with both muscular arms in long, reaching strokes, the elbows beautifully crooked, the forearm digging deep down, the hands flung far behind like a couple of fins, and the lithe, snaky body ploughing downwards through the water, cutting it like a cheese.

And those who watched held their breath to see Chick Mullins overhaul Transom, their "flyer," Cust catch and pass Chick, and Jack Stirling, coming on with a rush like a Service motor pinnace, walk past all of them.

Stibbald and Pontifex, who had arrived later than usual, one with his eye in mourning, the other with his arm still in a sling, exchanged a significant whistle, and after a pause Ponty said, in a confidential undertone:

"Thinking the matter over, Stib, I think I had better postpone smashing that fellow Stirling to a pulp till after the team race with Crawley. It's only a matter of ten days, and he might be wanted for reserve."

"Just so," said Stibbald. "Strangely enough, I was thinking that perhaps after all I had better defer giving him the hiding of his life till after then, for the very same reason."

"Look out! Here comes the Ferret!" was shouted, and Ezra Crabbe threaded his way among the increasing throng with their bath robes over their tunics alongside the pond.

And as he approached he dealt cuffs and kicks free and vindictively to any small boy who happened to impede his path. A close observer might have noted that he reserved his cuffs, kicks, and maledictions for the smallest, weakest, and most timid.

But the green eyes shifted under the sandy lashes in quest of one figure in particular, till at last they caught sight of Jack Stirling, emerging like a young seal from a plunge that had carried him the full breadth of the bath. And the livid face grew darker.

Then Ezra Crabbe strode on, and came within hearing of Stibbald and Pontifex, who were agreeing that perhaps it would be injudicious to give the new chaps the hammering they richly deserved till it was quite sure they were not wanted for reserve, or even first team.

"You humbugs!" muttered Ezra Crabbe to himself. "Precious lot you care about the team race. You've had one brush with the young demon, and found him a harder nut than you've had to tackle at this wretched place before, and you want to save your wretched faces. And I looked to you to make St. Claire's too hot to hold him. But it's the old story—if you want a

thing done, do it yourself. And I'll do it. I'll pay off on Jack Stirling the grudge I've had stored up against his father!"

Meanwhile their spin over, the three chums and Transom were cheerfully punching to and fro a pole "pill," with mighty, strenuous biffs that thudded like blows on a damp big drum. And Jack Stirling, catching the ball full pitch, sent it with a terrific drive in the direction of Transom.

Transom was a fraction of a second late in taking it, so the ball flew on unchecked with tremendous velocity right across the pond, over the margin, and smote Ezra Crabbe, the chemistry master, full on the left ear, and bounded thence on to the roof of the dressing-shed.

Crabbe staggered for some moments in a sort of weird serpentine dance right into the course of a corpulent youth, who came at that moment out of the shed intent on taking a running dive. And just as Ezra Crabbe gyrated to the very edge of the bath, there was a collision that shot the chemistry master over the brink into the bath without having observed the formality of divesting himself of his garments.

"Help! Murder! Police! Get me out! Ahoo! Urrrr!"

Crabbe's head went under.

The three chums and Transom made a dash at him, and dived as one man—with the result that they clutched each other, and tugged and hauled for several seconds with Ezra Crabbe beneath them.

"Silly cuckoos!" spluttered Jack Stirling. "We're drowning him, instead of saving him!"

"Bai Jove! Don't y'know, so we are—eh, what?" gasped C. C. C.

Then, making a periwinkle dive, he clutched Ezra by the ankle. and brought him to the surface, wrong end up.

But Jack and Chick brought up his arms and his head and shoulders. Transom now lent a hand, and they steered the gesticulating, struggling, spluttering master to the steps, where the youth of tremendous girth, to make up for barging him in, made frantic dabs with a hooked pole at his collar. The boy, however, only succeeded in prodding the unfortunate master's ears and other features with the sharp-ended pole.

"You murderers!" Ezra howled. "I'll have the law on you! Help! They've tried to drown me; now they're clubbing me to death! You scoundrels!"

At length, however, he was hauled to the sheds, where half a dozen onlookers with the best intentions, began applying half a dozen various methods of resuscitation—flopping him down on his face, rolling him over on to his back, standing him on his head, pounding his ribs with their knuckles, and so on, till Ezra Crabbe, completely exhausted, ceased his frantic struggles, and plaintively howled for mercy.

At length he got free, and made his way back to Masters' Quarters, firmly convinced that the whole affair was prearranged, and that Jack Stirling had had a leading hand in it.

"He's spotted me; I'm certain of it!" he snarled to himself. "He's been told something. He pretends not to know me, but he does! He's been sent here to shadow me, and find out what I've done with his Aunt Meg.

"War" was solemnly declared against the chums, and night or day it was all the same—the battle raged incessantly.

Yes, Meg, it's all through you—all my anxiety, all my dread by day and night, and you shall pay for it—yes, you shall pay for it this very day!"

And that very day accordingly, as soon as second school was over, Ezra Crabbe—who, by special leave, lived out of bounds, and, for reasons best known to himself, never invited a soul to his residence, and never, if he could help it, referred to his address—set out and, by devious paths, reached a desolate-looking house, in a dark and gloomy lane, surrounded by a high wall, and half-hidden by a clump of mournful cedars.

Unlocking a big, black, heavy door, which he carefully bolted behind him, he made his way along a dark corridor and up a creaking staircase to a wretched attic, chosen because it could not be overlooked. Even then the shutters were closely barred, to keep out every chink of daylight, and Ezra turned the gas on from the main with a spanner he took from his pocket.

"Hallo, there!" he shouted, as he lit a burner.

And from the darkest corner of the dark apartment started with a shudder and a weak, quavering shriek, the frail, emaciated form of what had once been a woman.

"Yes, yes!" she gasped hastily. "What is it, Ezra? Tell me you're not going to beat me to-day! And, oh, Ezra, have you brought me food?"

"Bah!" he replied. "That's all you think of and dream of—dinners and breakfasts and suppers!"

"Yes," came the humble reply; "but dreaming's as far as I get mostly——"

"Don't interrupt," came the fierce answer, "or else I'll——"

Even before the threat was uttered the terrified creature, scared long ago out of her senses, had flown back into her corner, where she lay, huddled in her rags.

But Ezra Crabbe hauled her out, snarling.

"Sit up there, and behave, you old harridan! Obey your lawful lord and master! There's food for you—good food, mind you! A whole haddock all to yourself, so you can't tell them your husband starves you! Even if they ever found you, and tried to part us two turtle-doves! If they did, I'd—I'd scrag you!"

He flung on the table the fish wrapped in a paper, also a small loaf, growling as the poor creature began to munch the latter.

"There now, don't begin to gnaw the fish before it's cooked! And now, listen! I want some money — twenty pounds!"

Frail, terrified as she was, the wretched creature sprang up with flaming eyes, and screamed:

"You can't have it! You sha'n't have more than a pound—never more than that at a time, I swear! Because I know you, Ezra Crabbe! If you once got hold of my money—the money that you married me for—blind fool that I was to let you—you'd kill me, and hide me in the ground! That's why you can beat me as you will, starve me as you will! You sha'n't have my money, except a pound at a time—a pound at a time!"

His thin lips writhed, and he quivered with the fury that possessed him. He knew she spoke the truth.

"This once—this once!" he pleaded, in coaxing tones.

"No; not once—not if you kill me!" she cried. "And you won't do that—

you won't dare kill the woman you married for her money!"

CHAPTER V.

A Paperchase—The Doom-Dealers.

During the morning there had been considerable comment concerning the three new arrivals at St. Claire's.

The result of the rag had been that they were regarded in sundry quarters as "hot stuff," whom it was safest to let severely alone, especially when there was furniture handy to chuck about.

"It's all very fine and large of Ponty and Stib to grouse about the three new 'uns," said Chandos, "just because they turned out a big handful, and took their ragging fighting. They're all right for ducker, and I'm not going to join the dead set against them!"

"Nor I!" said Transom. "They're the right sort every time!"

But the rest were not so sporting. The dead set was going to be made—war was solemnly declared against the new three and their "pup," the Weakling. Hay was made of their beds and their lockers; heavy bundles of books swooped down from upper flights on their way upstairs, and sometimes hit the mark. They found ever and anon warnings written in red ink, and headed with a skull and cross-bones, pinned to their desks:

"Get your people to take you home! We don't want you here!"

"Better to leave alive than dead!"

"If you three don't clear out, something's going to happen!"

Jack Stirling caught Slimy Syme in the act of affixing one of these, and, with the aid of the red-ink pot, sent him howling back to the common-room with a crimson mask that would not come off for days.

Meantime, the three and the Weakling prudently stuck together, avoiding lonesome walks by night or day.

Soon came the first half-holiday of the term, and a paperchase had been arranged. The selected brace of hares, however, were indisposed, and it was darkly hinted to Jack, Chick, and C. C. C. that their only chance of escaping another "rag," and one of more serious proportions, was by two of them acting as hares and giving the pack a run worth having.

It was a stiff countryside, with a deep and, in parts, swift and dangerous winding stream, with awkward stretches of brake undergrowth and bracken, and it possessed a range of inland cliffs, containing, according to the legends of the locality, numerous wonderful caves. These latter were, however, supposed to have been sealed up by a mighty landslip that occurred over a century back.

There were also a number of pools covered with green slime and duckweed in the surrounding districts, and it was the playful custom of the pack, in the event of the hares not affording a good run, to duck them, when caught, in the slimiest and most smelly of these ponds available.

Accordingly, the three tossed up as to who should act as hares, the choice falling on Jack and Chick. Furnished with bags of shredded paper "trail," the two set off at a raking stride to make the most of the ten minutes' "law" allowed, and the pack, watching them disappearing across the landscape, realised that they had a speedy quarry to deal with.

But Slimy Syme chortled:

"Tommy rot! They're heading right away for Brakedene, and they'll get caught in the loop of Blackmarsh Brook, where it's too deep to ford and too swift to swim. We shall have them set, and Dead Man's Mere will be nice and handy to duck 'em in!"

"First catch your hares!" C. C. C. remarked.

And many others of the pack confessed they had their doubts.

But to an extent Syme was justified in his calculations. The hares, pressing on across country, choosing the roughest bits of brake, the most awkward hedge-gaps, and heaviest ploughland, found, just when their first wind was going, and their second seemed as though it never would come, that they were within the windings of the brook that coiled itself like a dark ribbon in and out the pleasant valley.

At first the discovery rather cheered them than otherwise. They were good jumpers and swimmers, and they took the stream in several places in their stride, waded it in others, swam it in yet others, and were congratulating themselves that they were leaving the pack a stiff trail to follow.

But by-and-by they found themselves inside that very loop Syme had in mind, and, coming up to the stretch immediately ahead of them, they found it full of long weeds, trailing and winding in dark masses, and with swirling currents and eddies too swift and fierce to justify them attempting to cross it at the spot.

They searched further along its banks, but found that, as they went further they fared worse. The stream stretched wider and ran fiercer in eddies made by tangled undergrowth, that would lock them like iron wires.

And time was flying. The pack would be gaining ground with every minute. Looking backward, they realised that to retrace their course would be to rush right into their line. A moment they halted in gloomy hesitation.

"Looks as if we're shut in," said Jack ruefully. "They'll be coming up directly."

"That's about the size of it," chimed in Chick. "But I say, sonnie, if we're going to be chucked into any duckweedy water, somebody else is coming in, too! What do you think?"

"Same as you," said Jack grimly. "Hallo! What's that?"

It was a voice, and in its direction

With scarce a moment's warning down crashed the huge boulder, only missing the boys by an inch or two.

they saw a head bob up behind a fringe of reeds and bullrushes, and the pale face of the Weakling appear.

He scrambled up the bank towards them, in one hand a net, in the other a jar containing newts—collecting which was his hobby.

"Hallo, hares!" he chuckled. "Come to a teaser—eh?"

"That's obvious!" growled Jack. "Don't rub it in, kiddie!"

"I'm not going to," said the lame boy. "Especially with you two chaps, who took my part and saved me from that cruel beast Stibbald. I'm going to play the part of the mouse in the fable, and save the lion—no, the two lions—who saved me. Come along the bank here. You see that eddy in the centre, that looks worse than any other bit of the stream? Well, it isn't. That swirl is made by a shallow bit of

bottom, and the water is clear of weeds up to it, and so it is beyond it. You could swim across to the shallow, rest there, and then get to the other side safe as houses."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Jack. "Come along, Chick!" And together they dashed into the stream.

"So long! Good luck! Wish I could come with you! There are some lovely specimens on the other side," said Binkie.

His tone was so wistful, there was such sorrow at his affliction in his pallid face, that the two turned, hesitating, and Jack said cheerily:

"Come along, then! Slip off your knicks and tie 'em round your neck, and kneel on our shoulders."

It was done almost as soon as said. In midstream they found themselves standing on a stretch of hard rock, across which they waded breast-high; then, swimming the rest, reached the opposite shore in safety.

"Now," said Jack, "let's scoot across to that stretch of brushwood under the big range of rock, and take cover."

"That's a good idea!" chirped the Weakling. "That woodland is what they call the 'Landslip.' From there you can watch them come to a check on the other side. They won't know where you got across, because the current and the breeze are scattering the trail. And I've got some grub in my knapsack—real good tuck—that I took out of your hampers before I doctored what I left in them."

"Weakling," said Jack, "you're a marvel—upon my soul you are!"

Chuckling, the three made their way across the stretch of broken marshland, then by winding ways up the slopes of the Landslip, leading to the face of the inland cliff. At length they reached the belt of undergrowth, in the ambush of which they threw themselves down for rest and refreshment, and to watch the movements of the pack when they came into sight. They felt certain that the hounds would be completely at fault, and they wanted to witness their confusion.

They had not long to wait. By twos and threes the hounds came up, perplexed to find the trail scattered right up to the very banks of the brook at its most dangerous point, then ceasing—exactly where they could not tell, for the wind had swept it to and fro along the bank.

And some of it was lying on the breast of the waters, far low down beyond where the hares had really halted. And at the spot where they saw the trail floating down the swift, dark stream, the pack halted, with blank faces.

Some of the hounds turned a trifle pale as they discussed the problem. Presently Curzon Cursitor Cust came up with his long, leisurely stride that, though the sprinters had scoffed at it, had worn a good many of them down, and was beginning to tire out the best.

He, too, scanned the trail and the stream, and his face grew whiter.

But he put into words what they dared not:

"Yes, yes," he flashed out, turning on them with blazing eyes; "I know what you're thinking. Those two—the only real sportsmen in your wretched St. Claire's—to escape your threatened indignities and violence, have tried to get across the stream, and, for all we know, gone down in it, gripped by the reeds or swept away and sucked down by some remorseless eddies. But I solemnly warn you, if they have I'll speak out. I'll tell all I know, and if there is law in Britain, you, brutes and cowards that you are, shall answer to it. What! Aren't you going to do something—at all events, to try and do something? Oh, you curs!"

For, appalled by his words, by the recollection of what they had planned and what they had threatened, the pack turned tail and fled away from the scene of the disaster they deemed they had brought about, leaving the one brave, true heart amongst them there alone.

Alone in an agony of sorrow, so that he flung himself full length among the rushes, groaning.

"They are gone—gone! The two cheeriest, gamest, straightest chums I ever met! White men all through! And I meant to have been their chum for all my life!"

He lay prostrate with grief. Then, after a while, he started up, exclaiming:

"Something must be done!"

He ran to and fro along the bank; then, espying where one or two scraps of trail still whirled round in the eddies, he said to himself that perhaps one of them had gone down there, and it might not be too late to save him if he could only be got out.

He flung off his shoes and jersey.

His intent was so clear that Jack, Chick, and Binkie rushed out of their ambush on the other side, shouting:

"Stop! Stop! We're all serene!"

But it was too late. He was gone. Cust was battling for his life with the eddies. He dived beneath the surface and came up breathless, whilst the stream swept him away towards that clump of wicked, clinging, strangling weeds.

And Jack and Chick, without a word to each other, rushed down to the brink, plunged in, caught the brave lad each by an arm, and swam back with him to the bank. It was not an easy task. But it was a matter of life or death, and, with almost superhuman effort, they reached the bank safe and sound.

There was not much said about it, but they understood each other. Little lame Binkie had only been prevented from going in to help them by Jack's shouted threat that if he did he'd give him the hiding of his lifetime. But there was a bond of comradeship between them now that they knew that neither years nor fortune, good nor ill, would ever break or weaken.

They went back to their ambush to compare notes and finish their welcome snack of food.

There, in a cavity within the shade of the branching undergrowth, they sat, under a ledge of rich red sandstone, quietly munching. And meanwhile there kept drop, drop, dropping from above little specks, flecks, and flakes of sandstone.

At last Binkie noticed it, and looked up. He thought that the stone above them was shifting.

Binkie told his chums his suspicions, but they scoffed at what they declared was his imagination.

"Run—run!" shouted Binkie, in such a note that they obeyed him without question, and so saved their lives. For a second later, down crashed that overhanging bulge of sandstone and a mass of solid rock behind it, with a crashing thud that shook the very earth. But, mercy of mercies, the avalanche rolled just clear of them.

When the four chums had collected their scattered thoughts, curiosity conquered fear. They scrambled back up the face of the slope to where the sheer side of the cliff began.

And there, in the face of the rock, where the bulge of sandstone had been, they espied a crevice just at the end of a gully in the rock, so narrow that only one could reach it at a time.

And the first to reach it and peer within it was Jack. In spite of the warnings of his chums, he crept within it, and then returned, with blazing eyes, and beckoned them to follow.

"What is there to see?" they demanded, in voices hushed with awe.

"The most wonderful place in the world!" cried Jack, in an awed voice.

. . . . . .

Ten minutes later, the four found themselves within a cave of stalactites and stalagmites of the most beautiful colours and forms imaginable, lighted by a beam of light through another crevice in the cliff face above.

"Look—look!" cried Jack, in ecstasy. "Those fluted columns, straight and smooth as though carved by a sculptor! Look at the gorgeous colours, the dazzling whiteness! See that ledge, as though fashioned for a meeting-place! That dais, like a judge's seat! Why, it might have been a council-chamber fashioned by a master builder!"

"And I've a notion!" cried Binkie the Weakling. "Listen, you chaps! We are all agreed that St. Claire's College, in which we are fated to spend many terms, is, in its present state, intolerable, and that it must be reformed. Let us make ourselves its judges, its councillors, its reformers; pledged to work together in secret, to do justice within its walls, to punish injustice, to crush tyrants, to defend the weak, and to drive out from the old school the scorpions of wrong, cruelty, and oppression."

And with one heart and voice they cried, each with his hand upraised:

"We will!"

And this was the founding and the beginning of the Council of the Doom Dealers, which was to have a wonderful and far-reaching effect on St. Claire's Collegiate School during the coming days.

A new day was about to dawn, and the tyrants and bullies who now reigned supreme were to be overthrown once and for all.

(This magnificent new School Serial will be continued in next Tuesday's "C.B.C." Please order to-day!)

Invisible Ink Secrets.

There are several ways in which two persons can correspond with each other unknown to even the people before whose eyes the very letter is held.

For instance, you may use new milk as ink. When dried this is invisible, but if coal-dust or soot be scattered upon the paper the writing becomes legible.

Diluted sulphuric acid, lemon-juice, solutions of nitrate and chloride of cobalt, or chloride of copper write colourless; but on being heated the characters written with the first two become black or brown, and the latter green. And when the paper becomes cool the writing disappears, leaving the paper blank again.

Two good invisible inks are made by saltpetre dissolved in water, and equal parts of sulphate of copper and sal ammoniac dissolved in water.

On the EDGE of the EMPIRE.

This splendid new series of story-articles has been specially written for "C.B.C." by the author of "The Call of the Sea." It describes the adventurous life lived by men who seek their fortunes on the outskirts of civilisation.

THE HARDEST LIFE IN THE WORLD.

Do not, if you can avoid it, go to sea on a "banker."

A "banker," let me explain, is a two-mast fore-and-aft schooner of some seventy tons burthen, employed in the cod fishery on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

These vessels mostly hail from Nova Scotian or Newfoundland ports, and the fishing season lasts from May to September. During these months the crew of a "banker" suffer enough hardship, and experience sufficient adventure, to last an average man a lifetime.

At the same time there is a certain attraction attached to the vocation which appeals to many men.

A fine spring morning on the Banks is flooded by brilliant sunshine. The schooner rides easily on the long, silver swells, straining gently at her cable the while. Three or four small boats, stout, but easily handled, called "dorys," put off, and pull away to some likely spot. Some may contain two men, and others only one.

All around, as far as the eye can reach, other schooners are anchored, the crew of each being engaged in the same way. The usual method of fishing is to have a long line, with hooks suspended every few feet, and on a busy day the fisherman is practically hauling in fish all the time.

As darkness settles over the face of the waters anchors are hove up, and the dorys return to their respective ships, each being, more or less, full of big, glistening cod. These are shot into the "pen," a table is rigged up, and there follows a strenuous time. The men form a chain from the pen to the hold, and every man has certain work to perform on every fish.

By the time the cod is finished with, it has been "headed," "gutted," stripped of its backbone, washed, salted, and stowed away. The livers undergo treatment for the extraction of the oil they contain.

Then the watch on deck cleans up the ship, and the skipper, who has tallied the contents of each dory, enters the day's catch in the log-book. The others turn in, and snatch a few hours' hard-earned rest.

A few days pass, and the skipper decides to try another spot.

There are many little things which influence his opinion on the whereabouts of fish, such as depth and colour of water, nature of bottom, size and variety of a day's catch compared with the previous day's, etc.

An experienced and confident man watches all these points, and, when his judgment prompts him to try another spot, he sails away surreptitiously. He does not want the whole fleet to profit by his knowledge; the other vessels will follow him quite soon enough.

So under cover of darkness the anchor is weighed, and with lights out the schooner slips away to explore fresh waters.

By daylight the fleet is left behind, and the little craft has the ocean to herself. Soundings are taken regularly, and at length the skipper's mind is made up.

"Let go everything!" he shouts, and the vessel gradually comes to a stop.

Out go the lines over the bulwarks. There is no need to use the dorys. It is only after about the third day, when the offal, thrown overboard at night, has scared the fish from the immediate vicinity of the ship, that these are required.

Perils of the Deep.

Then comes the fog, for there is no place in the five oceans to equal the Grand Banks for fog. Quickly the white saturating mists descend and enshroud the vessel, and hour after hour the warning clang of the ship's bell goes out over the desolate, impenetrable waste of waters.

Suddenly the deep boom of a liner's steam-whistle reaches the schooner, and the look-out strikes the bell for all he is worth. Again the sound comes, this time much nearer and louder. Then out of the misty obscurity appear the towering bows of a massive liner, appalling in their loftiness.

All hands shout warningly, and the bell is clanged furiously. In the nick of time the steamer's course is altered, and the men in the schooner catch a glimpse of iron-riveted plates and brass-rimmed ports as she flashes by.

"Hi, you blunderin' great ox! Why the dickens don't you slow down?" the enraged skipper shouts at her bridge.

But the only answer is another boom on her steam-whistle as the liner is enfolded in the great white blanket.

"Half a dozen brass-bound mates on 'er, and all ready to swear we wasn't ringin' our bell!" the skipper mutters, and turns his attention to the work of his ship.

Gradually the wind freshens, and the fog is dispersed. With the rising wind the sea gets bigger, and huge, white-crested, foam-streaked waves roll up from windward. The schooner now cuts some truly amazing capers. She tugs and jerks at her cable like an impatient horse; she prances up over her anchor, and then, with a mighty sweep, rushes back to leeward; up, and yet further up, goes her fo'c's'le, as she mounts the summit of a big sea, then with a sickening motion she drops into the trough 'mid a mass of spray.

The constant straining at the cable is bad for the ship, and if there is no more cable to pay out there is only one thing to do—up anchor, and run before the wind until the weather moderates.

This manœuvre is often carried out, and with success. The crew, indeed, take little heed of a gale, and those not on duty gather in the damp, cramp fo'c's'le, and sing rollicking ditties of the Banks and the fish.

Probably their continued struggle with danger and privation makes them look upon both lightly. But the howling gale, the cold, damp fogs, and the reckless liners, are but a few of the dangers which attend their calling. One other I will mention.

From the frozen North drift the silent, huge bergs and pack ice, and these will crush the timbers of the stoutest vessel. It is not difficult to escape these in clear, fine weather, but in fog and tempest they are a terrible menace.

Yet, in spite of all, the hardy mariners go forth, season after season, to battle against the overwhelming odds, and win through every time. But I should not say every time.

Every season there are schooners which leave port never to return, and there are others which return, but with some of the crew left behind fathoms deep on the relentless Banks.

NEXT WEEK:
LIFE AT THE WHITE MAN'S GRAVE.

When in trouble or in doubt, write to me to help you out.

My Dear Readers,—We are now well into the great New Year programme of serials, complete stories, and other features, which I promised you last month, and I am sure that every one of you feels that "C. B. C." was never brighter and better in every way than it is at this moment.

You have now had time to get into "The Forbidden Road" and "The Bullies of St. Claire," two of the finest serials it has ever been my pleasure to publish; and this week, my chums, we have number one of a novel and striking new series, "The Phantom Submarine."

I am glad to say there are still many more new stories to come along at an early date, without, of course, dislodging features that you are at present so very fond of.

Next week we have a new series which, again, is quite unique in its own way. The title is

'THEY CALLED HIM A COWARD,'

and I can honestly say that no finer adventure tales than these have ever been written. One reason is that the stories are not only very exciting and picturesque, but they are also full of human feeling. In so many adventure tales the characters are mere dummies, but you are all going to get very fond indeed of Hal Chester, the hero of "They Called Him a Coward."

If only I had two pages of Editorial Chat instead of one I could go on to tell you fellows about other magnificent stories that are coming along but I must content myself with telling you that one of these forthcoming treats is a new series of

BOXING STORIES.

Make a point, boys, of getting "C.B.C." every Tuesday as soon as it is published, and keep your eye on this page of mine, and you will be proud to feel that you are one of an increasing multitude of readers who are absolutely devoted to "C.B.C."

I have before me as I write a letter which tells of a newsagent selling one hundred copies of "C.B.C." in an hour, and I should imagine this is a record.

Do not be one of the fellows who, asking for "C.B.C.," is met with the cry "Sold out!" No other paper can possibly serve as a substitute for "C.B.C.," because, as you know, it stands alone as a genuine magazine of fiction and articles, the very best that has ever been produced, or can be, at the price of one penny.

YOUR EDITOR DOES ANSWER LETTERS.

Occasionally—not often, it is true—occasionally I receive a letter from a reader who tells me he is only writing just to see if I really do answer letters.

I think fellows who put me to the test like this must be new readers, as after the hundreds and thousands of letters I have signed and sent off, there can be very few old readers whom I have not been in communication with, through the post.

I do answer letters, my chums. The work of handling readers' correspondence, and giving sensible advice, and the best replies to their queries, is work that never has been and never will be neglected by me.

I am never weary of answering letters, and you are welcome to write as often as you please. I have many readers who write to me from time to time, just as they would write to any other friend or relation, and I hope that any of you fellows who have not written to me will drop me a line about anything you fancy, just for the sake of keeping in touch with me.

MANLY LITERATURE.

A friend of mine said to me the other day, after looking through CHEER BOYS CHEER, that he wondered the paper appealed as much as it does to boys as well as grown lads and adults. "Why," he said, "quite a number of your stories are really of a magazine type, and I am sure any adult would appreciate them!"

I wonder if any other critic is of the same opinion? If so, I would like to say that it is the manly, adult tone of our stories that makes "C.B.C." so immensely popular with all my readers.

No boy wants a childish story. When I was a boy my favourite stories, I well remember, dealt with characters who were at least well on the way to manhood; and it is the same with you, I am sure. If I gave you stories of the "feeding-bottle" type, you would very soon drop the paper, and nobody could blame you, either.

No, my chums, it is because I have set my face against everything that is childish and namby-pamby, and am giving you stories of real worth, dealing with real life, that "C.B.C." may claim to be the paper that is supreme. I intend it to remain supreme, too, by sticking to the manly class of stories that has won such a huge success!

TOO MANY GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

One of my North Country readers, with the very best intentions, drew up at the beginning of the year a long list of New Year resolutions. He has sent me a copy of this list, and I hope I shall not be misunderstood if I say I think there are rather too many.

Speaking for myself, I always find it hard enough to keep one or two good resolutions, and most of you will have had the same difficulty, I think. At any rate, I would always advise a boy to make only two or three resolutions at most, so that he can be sure of concentrating upon them.

It is a far finer thing my chum, to go right through the year without breaking the one New Year resolution you made, than to make a dozen or a score, and break them one after another.

Let me add that I am very glad to know so many of my chums voluntarily resolve to do better when a New Year dawns. Some people may sneer and say it is an old-fashioned idea, but these cynics are not worth taking notice of. All of you will live to be very thankful for the voluntary efforts you have made in your young days towards a healthy, manly, and pure life.

A CURE FOR CHAPPED HANDS.

I have received a very nice letter from one of my Yorkshire readers, who is very enthusiastic in his praise for our splendid serials and complete stories.

My chum also tells me that his work keeps him out in the open a great deal during the winter months, and he suffers from chapped hands. He asks me to give him a cure.

The method I always adopt to avoid chapped hands, my chum, is to see that the hands are thoroughly dried with the towel after I have washed them; and then, if they are at all rough, to rub them well with cold-cream. A penny box of cold-cream can be bought from any chemist.

The best time to rub the hands is the last thing at night, just before going to bed. Should my chum object on the score that the cold-cream may soil the bedclothes, he could wear a pair of loose-fitting gloves on the hands.

A BRIEF REPLY.

"Sydney L."—Wrong! But you did right to have a guess at it. The author's name will appear in a week or two.

Hushed Up!

An Enthralling Complete Story of Lester Griffith, Detective.

The tall bows of the big New York liner Carrick Castle had just come into sight around the Isle of Dogs as Lester Griffith reached the quay-side.

Suddenly a cheery voice hailed him from below.

"Hallo, Griffith! What brings you to these ends of the earth?"

Griffith looked down. A youngster in blue overalls was sitting in the cockpit of a small, sharp-nosed motor-boat, and smiling up at him.

"I might ask you the same question, Tyrrell," answered Griffith. "I thought Piccadilly was more your focus than Gravesend."

"Oh, I'm trying my new motor-boat!" replied Tyrrell carelessly. "She's a nailer! I got eighteen out of her coming down."

"The mischief you did! That's a big pace for a bit of a craft like her."

"Come and have a spin!" said Tyrrell eagerly. "I'd love to show you what she can do."

Griffith shook his head.

"I'm busy now. Got to meet a friend in this ship. But I tell you what. If you're not in a hurry I'd be glad of a run back with you."

"Right you are, old son! How long will you be?"

"An hour or so."

"All right! You'll find me at the Lord Nelson. I'm going there to get some tea."

"Thanks!" said Griffith. And at that moment a boat came up to the steps, and a voice hailed him sharply:

"Come on, Mr. Griffith!"

Griffith ran lightly down the steps, and jumped aboard.

The boat was that of the Customs authorities. Spencer, the supervisor, sat in the stern. He and Griffith shook hands. They were old friends. The crew gave way, and the boat shot towards the Carrick Castle, which was anchoring out in the stream.

"On business, I suppose, Griffith?" said Spencer, in a low voice.

Griffith nodded.

"Yes; that's why I wired asking you to put me aboard. I couldn't risk waiting till the ship tied up at the wharf."

"I see. Good luck to you! I hope you'll run it through all right."

"Oh, I think so!" said Griffith carelessly.

All the same he was not so sure as he seemed.

Three days previously he had had a cable in code from New York, telling him that young Morgan Rees, a son of one of the oldest families in the States, had got into serious trouble, and cleared out with a choice assortment of the family jewels, valued at something over £12,000. He had sailed in the Carrick Castle under the name of Scott.

The reason for putting the matter into Griffith's hands rather than those of the police was to avoid scandal. The family were particularly anxious that the theft should not get into the papers.

Griffith was to meet the ship, and endeavour to force young Rees to give up the stones. He was to tell him that his people would settle his debts, and make him a small allowance.

Griffith's arrival on board the liner was hardly noticed. He lost not a minute in getting hold of the purser, and discreet inquiries made it clear that the wanted man was aboard. The purser summoned a steward, who told Griffith that the self-styled Scott was at that moment in his cabin, packing to go ashore.

Griffith slipped a coin into the man's hand.

"See that we are not disturbed," he said. Then he went below, and, without knocking, walked straight into Scott's cabin.

Scott was on his knees, strapping a portmanteau. He sprang to his feet as Griffith entered. He was taller than Griffith, and not ill-looking, except for a certain reckless, dissipated expression.

"What the mischief do you want?" he demanded haughtily.

"A little matter of twelve thousand pounds' worth of jewels, Mr. Morgan Rees!" answered Griffith coolly.

"I don't know what you're talking about. You must be mad!" retorted the other. "My name is Scott."

His surprise seemed so genuine, that anyone less clever than Lester Griffith might have believed him. But Griffith had caught a tiny flicker of alarm in the deep-set eyes. He knew that he was right.

"Scott since you left New York," he answered quietly. "It was Rees till ten days ago."

"I tell you my name is Scott," replied the other hotly. "And get out of my cabin!"

He took a step forward. His manner was threatening. But Griffith did not move.

"Come now, Mr. Rees," he said soothingly. "It's no use trying to bluff me. I am authorised by your parents to receive the jewels from you, and to give you a receipt for them. They——"

The other made a sudden rush, flung his long arms round Griffith's body, and tried to swing him round on the bunk. Evidently he meant to make a bolt for it.

Quick as he was, Griffith was ready for him. His left hand flew out, and caught his opponent under the chin, pressing his head back, so that he had either to let go, or risk a broken neck.

Naturally he let go, and staggered back.

Next moment his right hand flashed to his hip-pocket.

Again Griffith was too quick, and before he could pull his pistol the American's wrist was seized in an iron grip which fairly paralysed his arm.

"No tricks of that sort, young man," said Griffith sternly, as he deftly slipped the automatic out of the other's pocket, and transferred it to his own.

"Sit down there!" he ordered, forcing the other on to the bunk. "Now, where are those stones?"

"Find out, and be hanged to you!" growled Rees sullenly.

"I should advise you not to give me any more trouble," said Griffith, in steely tones. "Let me tell you that if you go ashore with your plunder you will be arrested at once, and extradited to stand your trial in New York. Pleasant for you and your family both, for you will certainly get ten years in Sing-Sing. On the other hand, if you give up the stones to me, I am authorised to tell you that your debts will be settled and an allowance made to you in future."

The youth sat staring at Griffith, who returned his look steadily.

"Oh, take the beastly things!" he burst out at last. "They've been more worry than they're worth. Here they are!"

He flung a small satchel across to Griffith, who caught it, opened it, and turned the contents out on the table.

The jewels had been wrenched from their settings. They were splendid stones—diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. They scintillated like coloured fire under the electric light.

Griffith counted them quickly, and, satisfied that they were all there, bundled them back.

As he did so, the door opened, and a square-set, red-headed man put his head in.

"Oh, I beg pardon! I thought this was Mr. Franklin's cabin," he exclaimed apologetically, and was gone.

"Who is that?" asked Griffith sharply.

"I don't know him from Adam," returned Rees sulkily.

Griffith grunted, and made out the receipt. Then he handed Rees the agreement as to his allowance. He saw that it would be useless to offer him advice, so, bidding him a curt good-bye, he left the cabin, and made his way on deck.

Spencer had nearly finished, and Griffith, with the satchel stowed safely in the breast-pocket of his overcoat, waited for the boat. The sun was down, and dusk falling fast.

As he stood there, he again caught sight of the red-faced man, and the idea crossed his mind that the latter was watching him. But he hardly gave the matter a second thought, and a few minutes later was safe back on the wharf.

Tyrrell's motor-boat was still at the foot of the steps, and near it a tubby launch which had not been there an hour earlier. Griffith walked up into the town to find Tyrrell.

Outside the docks he stopped uncertainly. He did not know Gravesend, nor where to find the Lord Nelson.

He turned. A stocky-looking fellow in a blue jersey was leaning against the wall by the gate, smoking a clay pipe—a typical dockside loafer.

"Can you direct me to the Lord Nelson Hotel?" asked Griffith.

"Yes, sir. Take the fust to the left, then second to the right, through the alley. That'll bring you out in the main street, not a 'undred yards from the 'otel."

Griffith found no difficulty in following the directions, but the alley, when he reached it, proved to be so narrow and dark that he paused. It was not quite the place to venture through on a dark evening with twelve thousand pounds' worth of jewels in one's pocket.

A man came tramping past, an insignificant-looking, poorly-dressed individual.

"Does this lead to the main street?" asked Griffith.

"Yes, sir. 'Tisn't but a few yards," answered the other.

"Thanks!" said Griffith, reassured, and swung on rapidly.

The alley narrowed still more. It was quite unlighted. The old warehouses that stood on either side overhung, so that they cut off what little daylight was left. Underfoot the pavement was wet and greasy. There was a sour, unpleasant smell in the stagnant air.

The place was absolutely deserted, and the further he went the more uneasy Griffith grew.

Suddenly he came to an archway closed by a barred door.

The alley was a blind one.

All his suspicions aroused, he spun round.

As he did so two men ran out at him from a dark doorway. The first he met with a straight right-hand drive, which sent him reeling against the wall, but at the same moment the second caught him across the skull with a sand-bag, and dropped him like a log on the greasy pavement.

* * * * * *

There are few less pleasant sensations than coming to one's senses again after a long period of unconsciousness. It is bad enough for the patient if tucked up in bed and tended by a good nurse. Imagine what it means when one is tied hand and foot, and left lying on hard boards in a bare room.

The first thing that Lester Griffith realised, as he struggled back to a sense of his surroundings, was that he was very cold. The next was that his head was aching abominably, and that his throat was like a lime-kiln.

He opened his eyes. They were little use to him, for the room was almost dark. There was a moon in the sky, but the one window was so crusted with grime that there was only enough light to see that he was alone in a small square room, without a single stick of furniture.

Gradually memory returned to him, and as he realised how he had been trapped he ground his teeth with rage and mortification.

"Caught like a bird!" he muttered savagely. "The stones gone, and so are the fellows who took them!"

His first effort was to try and get free. His wrists were fastened with a handkerchief—his own, by the feel of it. They were tied behind his back, and his arms were so numb they were almost useless.

He tried to sit up, but couldn't manage it. Then he shouted, but a moment's thought was enough to make him realise that the mere fact that his captors had not gagged him proved that they were not afraid of his being heard.

No, he could not expect outside help. He had to rely on himself, and nobody else. If he could not get free, he might stay here till he starved.

The thought sent a shiver through him. He lay still a moment and considered. Then he set himself to roll over. It was difficult, but just possible.

He began to work across towards the window. It took him five minutes to cover the half-dozen feet, and the exertion was so terrible that by the time he reached it he was sweating at every pore.

He rested and took breath, then got his back against the wall, and by a tremendous exertion of strength managed to force himself to his feet.

He found himself standing against one side of the window. Now came the most risky part. He had to break a pane, and use the sharp edge to cut through the handkerchief. The chances were that he would cut his hands. If he cut them badly, he might bleed till he fainted. He would not be able to stanch the wound.

But Lester Griffith was never the man to shun a risk. He clenched his knuckles, and, sitting on the sill, pressed them against the pane.

Happily, the glass was thin. It broke almost at once, and he heard the fragments tinkle to the pavement below. At once he set to work to saw through the handkerchief.

It was no use trying to hurry, yet the blood boiled in his veins to think that every moment the robbers were increasing their distance.

The five or six minutes before the cambric gave way were the longest that the detective had ever known. But at last he was free, and it was a matter of seconds only before he had untied the other handkerchief which bound his ankles.

He felt in his pocket. Yes, the satchel was gone. So were his purse and pocket-book, his gold watch and silver cigarette-case.

He rushed to the door. It was locked.

For once Lester Griffith lost his temper. He made a rush like a bull, and the weight of his shoulder burst the flimsy fastenings, and he came crashing out on hands and knees on to a bare landing.

A minute later, and he was out into the alley. He took no risks, but ran hard until he reached the wider street. There he stopped, panting. A clock in a shop window opposite showed the time to be ten minutes to seven. It was, then, barely an hour since he had been trapped and robbed.

But what was he to do? He had not the wildest notion where the thieves had gone. They might have had a car waiting; they might have taken the train to town; or they might have scattered, and hidden in the slums of Gravesend itself. They were safe enough. He had not identified a single one of them.

Stay! What about that seedy-looking man whom he had met at the bottom of the alley—the man who had deliberately misdirected him? He must have been one of the gang.

From him Griffith's thoughts flew to the loafer at the dockyard gate. Could he, too, have had anything to do with the plant? It was he who had first spoken of the alley.

Any clue is better than none. Without a moment's hesitation Griffith was off hot-foot for the wharf. He did not, of course, expect to find the loafer still at his post, but it was just possible that someone else might be able to identify him.

As he came under the glare of the electric standard at the entrance to the wharf, a voice hailed him in an injured tone:

"Hallo, Griffith, where the mischief have you been? I'd almost given you up."

Then, before Griffith could reply:

"Great Scott, what's up, man? Your face is all over blood! Have you had an accident?"

"Worse!" answered Griffith grimly. And, drawing Tyrrell aside, he quickly told him what had happened.

Wilfred Tyrrell gasped.

"My only aunt! Twelve thousand quids' worth of stuff! Have you told the police?"

"That's just what I don't want to do. The Rees would rather lose the whole caboodle than have the scandal made public property."

"But you must get it back! Have you any idea who the chaps are?"

Griffith told him of the man at the gate.

"A stocky chap in a blue jersey?" exclaimed Tyrrell. "Had he a cast in one eye?"

"Come to think of it, so he had!" answered Griffith sharply. "Did you see him?"

"Yes, rather! He was one of the crowd that went off in an old launch about half an hour ago!"

"The launch that lay next yours?"

"That's it."

"Then, by thunder, that's the gang!" said Griffith, with growing excitement. "Tyrrell, did you by any happy chance notice which way they went?"

A pistol spat almost in Griffith's face, but the bullet flew wide, and next second he had sprung aboard the launch.

"Yes; down river."

Griffith gave a gasp of relief. He seized Tyrrell by the arm and began to run towards the quay-side.

"Tyrrell, if you can catch them I'll be your debtor for life!"

"Catch 'em! By jingo, I'll have a jolly good shot at it!" cried Tyrrell, catching the other's excitement. "Nip in, old man! This is my chance for trying the Buzzer's mettle!"

In less than sixty seconds the little motor-boat was threading her way in and out of the shipping. Once out in mid-stream, Tyrrell turned her head due East, and let her out.

The way in which the water began to swish off either side of the knife-like bow showed that Tyrrell had not exaggerated her powers. The banks began to slip by at amazing speed.

The moon was setting over the London smoke, but the night was bright and starry, and a fresh easterly breeze bit keenly as they met it.

"If I only knew where they were bound!" muttered Griffith.

"I should say that they were going to pick up a ship somewhere down in Thames Haven," said Tyrrell. "It's clear they had the whole business planned out ahead. The boodle's big enough to make it worth while for them to spend some money."

"I shouldn't wonder if you were right," said Griffith, between chattering teeth.

"Here, I say, you're freezing!" remonstrated Tyrrell. "Sling on those oilers! And if you'll look in the locker you'll find some brandy. A drop won't hurt you after what you've been through to-night."

Griffith was ordinarily a very temperate man, but the crack on the head had weakened him. He took the brandy thankfully, and the strong, soft spirit sent a glow through his chilled veins. The oilers, too, were a great comfort.

They were now round the bend and in wider water. The wind over the tide kicked up a nasty bobble, and sheets of spray flew over them. But the little Buzzer, magnificently handled, went tearing along on her course with unabated speed.

"What's she doing?" asked Griffith.

"About seventeen."

"And what could the launch do?"

"I'll be shot if she could touch nine!" answered Tyrrell confidently.

There was silence for a time. Both men were keenly watching the water ahead. A couple of big tramps passed up, and two or three barges. But not a launch of any sort was in sight.

"I say," said Tyrrell presently, "what's the programme if we spot 'em? Skull and cross-bones act, or what?"

"I've been thinking that out," said Griffith. "If we see them, you must simply bat straight ahead, as if you were going to pass them. Then, at the last minute, run right alongside. I'll nip aboard and trust to luck to lay 'em out."

"I like that!" retorted Tyrrell. "Where do I come in?"

"You'll have to stay and take care of the Buzzer."

"I don't think!" exclaimed Tyrrell. "If you imagine you're going to have all the fun, you're jolly well mistaken. Get that little anchor ready, and the moment we come alongside heave it aboard 'em. Then we can both take a hand in the game."

"Nonsense, Tyrrell! These men are desperate. There's no call for you to risk your life. You've done enough already."

Tyrrell's answer was a reckless laugh, and just at that moment Griffith gave a sharp exclamation:

"There she is!"

Sure enough, a tubby launch was thumping along close to the Essex shore. She was not going a yard over eight knots, though she was all out; and the Buzzer, moving two yards to her one, was overhauling her at a tremendous rate.

Griffith glanced ahead. A big lump of a ship lay moored about half a mile down-stream. He knew her for a powder-hulk.

"Look here, Tyrrell!" he said sharply. "Keep her going past them. That'll throw them off the scent. Get right in under the lee of that hulk. Then, as they come by, we can jump out at 'em like a dog from a kennel."

"Good egg!" answered Tyrrell shortly. His heart was thumping with excitement, but he did not let that interfere with his steering.

Passing the launch a hundred yards wide, the Buzzer, slightly slackening speed, shot into the dark shadow under the towering side of the hulk.

Plunk, plunk! came the launch, pounding along on the shoreward side of the hulk.

The Buzzer's crew listened breathlessly.

"Now for it!" muttered Griffith.

Tyrrell opened the throttle wide, and, like a hawk swooping on a clumsy rook, the Buzzer flashed upon the bigger craft.

There was a yell of surprise and alarm from the steersman, but before he could even alter his course the Buzzer was alongside.

Clank! went the little anchor flung by Griffith. It fell clean aboard the launch. There was a thump as the Buzzer banged alongside. Then, with a shout, Griffith and Tyrrell both leaped aboard.

A pistol spat almost in Griffith's face, but the bullet flew wide, and he brought his boathook down on the shooter's head, and the man tumbled over right on top of a second, upsetting him also.

There were four men in the launch. The steersman was, apparently, the only one who had his wits about him. He had been ready for the attack, and as Tyrrell leaped aboard almost on top of him, he clutched him in both arms and pulled him down.

The two lay struggling in the cockpit, while the fourth man, jumping over the pair who had gone down at the first attack, came at Griffith like a bull.

The launch was rocking like a cork in a ripple. Griffith drove at his man with the butt-end of his boathook, but failed to stop him, and the fellow got in close and gripped him round the waist.

Griffith almost went down, but with a violent effort recovered himself and managed to trip his opponent.

Down the man went, with all Griffith's weight on top, and as he fell his head struck the coamings, and he went limp as beef.

Griffith sprang to his feet, snatched up the boathook which he had dropped, and gave Tyrrell's man a tap across the skull which effectually quieted him.

The others, who were still rolling over one another in the bottom of the boat, saw it was all up. They yelled for mercy.

Griffith was taking no chances. He made Tyrrell take the pistol from the man who had fired first, and hold the muzzle at the owner's head while he tied him. The others he served in the same way.

The whole business had not taken five minutes. Griffith took the lantern from the cabin, and as its light fell on the face of the last man tied, he started.

"Oh, oh! Here's my friend of the dock gate, Tyrrell!" he exclaimed. "And that, if I'm not mistaken, is the red-headed man who watched me on the ship. Ha! It's all clear now. These beauties must have shadowed the spoil all the way from New York."

"The question is, where are the stones at present?" put in Tyrrell.

"Just so. And here's the man who'll answer it," flashing the light in the face of Red-head.

"I'll be hanged if I do!" growled back that worthy.

"You'll probably be hanged, anyhow. You'll certainly get ten years' hard if you don't hand over the plunder at once!" retorted Griffith.

"Are you going to prosecute?" demanded Red-head.

"Not if you shell out at once," answered Griffith promptly.

"They're in the cabin cushion," said Red-head briefly.

A minute later the precious packet was safe in Griffith's pocket. Tyrrell sprang back into the Buzzer and held her close alongside.

Griffith drew his knife across one strand of the cord that fastened the nearest prisoner's wrists. Then he followed Tyrrell aboard.

"Let her go," he said briefly.

The Buzzer swung round and raced away at full speed Londonwards, and the public never knew of that night's sensational adventures of Lester Griffith in the hushing up of a family scandal.

THE END.

(Next week: "The Vanishing Man.")

Five Minutes' Fun.

Infantile Interruption.

Despite the mud, the juvenile football match progressed merrily. Little Tommy Triggs was playing a great game at centre-forward, and only frequent bad luck had prevented him from finding the "net"—i.e., the space between two coats.

Now, however, came the great opportunity. He had the ball well in hand, and was just about to make a stinging shot which would have meant victory to his side, when a well-known voice rent the air:

"Hi, Thomas!" it cried. "Drop that nonsense, and come indoors at once, or I'll wallop you! D'ye hear?"

The young forward was in despair, but he knew it was no use to whine. The command was imperative, and he fled, leaving the ball in its beautiful position.

"It's no good, chaps!" he moaned, in his martyrdom. "I shall never be a pro.—not while I've got to mind our baby!"

Somewhat Puzzling.

"Um! Yes! Ah! Um!" remarked the medico in his best bedside manner to his patient, as they stood in the consulting-room. "I'll give you the following prescriptions."

And he handed him the small packages.

The patient opened them, and read the directions.

"A powder for my headache," he said aloud, "a pellet for my liver," he continued, "and a capsule for my gouty foot."

Then he stopped, and pondered deeply for a moment.

"I say, doctor," he queried, "how'll the little beggars know the right place to go when they get inside?"

"Mister," inquired a tramp, "would you contribute a shilling to help to purify your thriving city?"

"What's the idea?"

"A shilling will buy me a ticket to the next town!"

Breathless Urchin (to constable in the slums): "You're wanted dahn our court—and bring a hamb'lance!"

Policeman: "What do you want the ambulance for?"

Urchin: "Muvver's found the lidy wot pinched our doormat!"

Took It Lying Down.

Only that afternoon had the travelling show arrived, but now the merry business was in full swing.

"Now then, ladies an' gents," roared the showman, in stentorian tones, "walk up and see the live giant! He's the biggest giant you ever saw! Nine feet high in his socks!"

"Nine feet!" ejaculated the unbelieving countryman. "'E ain't nine feet high! Why, your van ain't much higher than that!"

"But he's not standing up," said the showman; "he's lying!"

"Yes," retorted the countryman, as he walked away, with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his good-natured face, "an' 'e ain't the only one, neither!"

He: "Did you see the pleased expression on her face when I told her she didn't look any older than her daughter?"

She: "No; I was looking at the expression on her daughter's face!"

Miss Screecher: "I wonder if Uncle Jim remembered me when he made his will? I used to sing to him."

Lawyer: "Yes; he evidently remembered you—at least, your name isn't mentioned in the document!"

By Gentle Persuasion.

"Now, my little dear," said the photographer, "if you'll just keep still a moment we shall soon have a pleasant picture."

But nothing on earth would induce John Willie to keep still.

"If you'll just go outside, madam," the artist said, after he had tried for half an hour, "I think I can manage it all right."

John Willie's mother went out, for she, too, was tired of the strain. And, behold! five minutes later the photographer smilingly assured her that all was well. As for John Willie, he was as meek as a lamb. Only when they reached home did his mother attempt to discover the reason.

"Muvver," John Willie explained, "he looked ter'ble at me, and said: 'Now, then, you ugly little beast, if you don't keep your twisting carcase still, I'll skin you alive!' That's why I kept quiet."

A "Dead Cert."

A gentleman was travelling on a train when it suddenly pulled up at a station. Pushing his head out of the window, he shouted to the guard:

"Shall I have time to get a drink?"

"Yes, sir," answered the official.

"Can you give me a guarantee that the train won't start?" urged the other.

"Yes; I'll take one with you!" was the smiling rejoinder.

"You look warm."

"I have been chasing a hat."

"Did your hat blow off?"

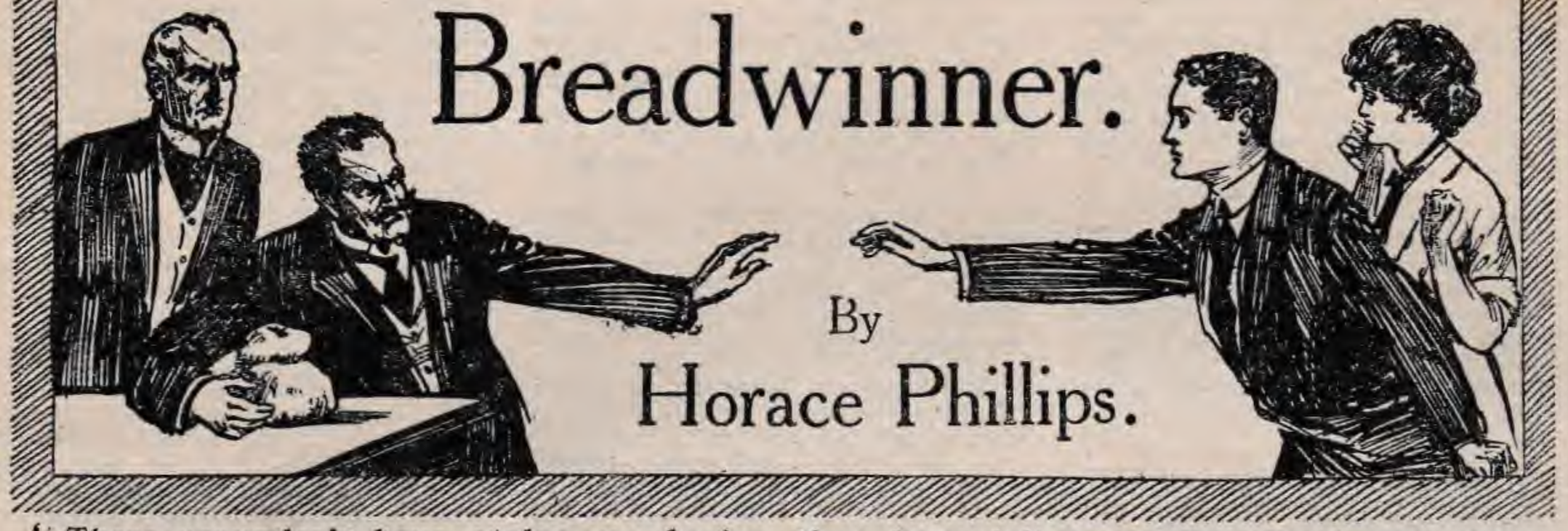
"It was not my hat; it belonged to a pretty girl."

"Did you catch it?"

"Yes. My wife saw me chasing it!"

The Boy Breadwinner.

BEGIN READING THIS GREAT NEW STORY TO-DAY!



By Horace Phillips.

"These scoundrels have stolen my brains, they have left us to beg for bread. But let them beware. MY TIME WILL COME!"

THE STORY IN A NUTSHELL.

JIM CARDEN, a young and clever mechanic, is the sole breadwinner in a humble family, consisting of himself, his sister HETTY, a schoolboy brother BOB, and "LITTLE JACKY," a cripple.

Jim has invented a new type of motor-engine, and he resolves to place it before MR. HARMON, the owner of the motor works in Millton, where he is employed.

Robbed of His Brains.

To the lad's surprise and dismay, Mr. Harmon tells him that this same invention has already been submitted to him by CARL RICHEL, the German manager of the works, and patents have been applied for.

Jim suspects that the idea has been stolen from him by Carl Richel, and there is a dramatic scene, Mr. Harmon, for cunning reasons of his own, taking Richel's part against the lad.

Sacked at a moment's notice by Harmon, poor Jim returns utterly broken-hearted to his home, and there a fresh blow falls.

The lad is suddenly arrested, the police having discovered stolen goods in his work-shed in the garden, and next day he is found guilty and

sent to prison

for a week.

HARRY REDWIN, Mr. Harmon's nephew and heir, refuses to give up his friendship for Jim, and, forsaking his crafty uncle, he resolves to earn his own living, and so help the Cardens to keep a roof over their heads.

When Jim comes out of prison he saves the life of a well-connected fellow, TOM CORNISH, who, in return, gives Jim the job of putting a new engine into a motor-car.

Jim is overjoyed at this change of fortune, as it means that he can carry out another new invention.

When the car is completed, Jim has the good fortune to meet with Mr. Julius Tyreman, an American millionaire, who controls a huge motor combine.

Struck by the value of Jim's invention, Tyreman arranges with him to send the car to the Motor Show, in London; but Carl Richel, hearing of this, resolves that the car shall never reach its destination.

(Now read on.)

"You Carry Me, Jim!"

A solemn hush brooded over the Boy Breadwinner's humble home, behind the little shop where he was toiling from morn to night. It was four o'clock in the afternoon—a time when Hetty, with a song upon her lips, usually set about preparing tea for the happy family. But to-day her movements were all on tiptoe, and it was in a whisper she answered Jim, when he came in, grimed with hard work.

"How is he now, Hetty?"

"A little easier, I think. I left him sleeping a moment ago. Oh, Jim—Jim, how my heart bleeds for the little fellow, and he so silent, so brave!"

"Ay!" said Jim huskily. "God has given him a strong spirit in that weak frame of his. Poor Jacky!"

For it was of little Jacky they were speaking in these tremulous, tragic whispers—Jacky, their cripple brother, who was lying upstairs.

Ever since the night of the fire at the former home he had been ailing on and off, and this morning there had been such alarming symptoms of his old malady, that Hetty had run for the doctor.

Then had fallen the blow that knocked the bottom out of their happiness over Jim's recent triumph, and the bright future that had seemed so near at hand. Jacky was very ill. Heaven only knew how bravely he must have borne with his suffering during the last few days, to avoid alarming those who loved him dearly. He was so ill that he must go to the hospital, the doctor said, and at any minute now the closed ambulance might arrive.

And this was the day on which Jim was to have gone to London with his car. It was round at the railway yard now, ready for transit by a slow passenger train.

"Old girl," he said, resting a hand upon Hetty's heaving shoulders, as she wept softly with a grief there was no restraining. "Take heart, dear. I—I know you feel it even more than I do, if that were possible. But there is still hope."

"Is there—is there hope? But, Jim, the doctor wouldn't say so. I asked him, and he—he said nothing. Oh, Jim, it will kill me, to see the little mite taken away——"

"Hush!" He patted her soothingly. "They will be kind to him; they couldn't help getting to love our Jacky, brave little man that he is. And we—we'll go to see him every day."

"But——"

"I'm not going to London—I can't," he said quietly. "I'd never leave him —like this—not for all the gold in the world! There, there, hope for the best, Hetty."

He paused and reared his head to listen.

"That's Jacky I hear now," he whispered. "Let me go up—alone."

He rinsed his hands under a tap, and then climbed the stairs with his old firm, hearty step, humming a tune all the time; and when he pushed open the bed-room door, there was Jacky craning towards him with a bright look in his burning eyes.

"Jim!"

"Hallo, old chap! You ought to be asleep, cocky; but let me sit here and talk with you quietly, and no one'll know any different."

He pulled a chair up to the bedside, and held Jacky's thin hand.

"I—I didn't cwy, Jim, when I heard——"

"Of course you didn't, old man! You're going to show 'em what you're made of, and I bet you have a fine old time, what with scrumptious things to eat and make you well, and heaps of toys to play with. And you know, Jacky boy, we shall come every day to see you."

"Will you, Jim? Every day?" whispered the sufferer, beginning to cry a little now. "Hetty an' Bob—I knew they would. But I fought you were going to London to get a great big heap of money?"

"Harry will go and get that, sonny; and I'll stay here and come and see you often and often, until one fine day we come driving up in our own great big motor, and bring you home again, all serene! Won't that be fine—eh?"

Jacky smiled bravely through his tears, and nestled closer to his brother. In the silence that followed, a horse with a light van behind could be heard clop-clopping down the road.

"Is that it, Jim—the amb'lance? Are they coming—so soon?"

"Well, you see, old man, they want to be quick and get you quite well——"

"So's I can come home again, Jim?"

"And be stronger than ever," said the big brother, fighting to bear up himself. "Jacky boy, I don't like to part with you, even for a day or two;

but you be brave and—— J[illegible]y," he cried. breaking down at last, "I do wish I could bear it for you!"

There was a single knock at the street door, and then the sound of low voices.

"Jim, it's them—they're here!" faltered the youngster, clasping his wasted arms about his brother's neck. "I'm not a bit afwaid; I'm not cwying, am I? Don't let them carry me down, though. You carry me, Jim, like you always have. I'm going to be brave, same as you were that time the p'liceman came and took you away."

"Ah, and I came back to you all, didn't I?"

"Yes, Jim; and p'waps—p'waps I'll come back, too, some day! I wish I could be strong, an' gwow up, an' do lots of clever fings like you," said little Jacky, clinging closer to his weeping brother. "But I don't mind, Jim. I'm not a bit afwaid, Jim, if only you carry me down!"

—•—

The Shadow in the Moonlight.

In that hour of trial over little Jacky's illness and his going to the hospital, Jim Carden showed the stuff he was made of.

Without a moment's hesitation, he had abandoned all thought of journeying to London with the car.

"I can't leave him like this," he had said firmly. "I wouldn't leave him now for all the gold in the world!"

And to that unsefish resolution the Boy Breadwinner adhered, forgetting all dreams of glory and riches in connection with the exhibition of his wonderful engine at the great motor show, and thinking only of the little sufferer, torn from their midst by cruel Fate, perhaps never to come home again.

So it was Harry Redwin who took his ticket for London about ten o'clock that night. The car was going up by a slow passenger train and Harry meant to travel with it. He was taking no chances; and who could tell what fresh villainy might not be afoot?

"Yes, old fellow," he said to Jim, who came to see him off. "if I could travel in the car itself I would, and chance being frozen to death. But as that's out of the question, this is my compartment!"

As he spoke, he entered the very last compartment of the very last carriage, to the rear of which a low railway truck was coupled, with the car safely roped upon it.

Jim could not help smiling

"You'll have your eye on her, anyhow," he said. "But don't keep your head out of the window all the way, old man, else I'll have you in hospital, too. Good-bye, Harry, and good luck!"

The guard was blowing his whistle.

"So-long, Jim!" cried Harry, reaching out, and striking palms for the last time. "I'll keep you posted up, and whatever you do don't forget to write. Ah, I wish you were going instead of me, Jim! It's not fair, this! But I mean to do my level best!"

"I know it, old fellow."

Jim, walking beside the train as it steamed out, cast a final look at the car on the truck, and waved a hand to it as though it were an old friend.

"Good luck, old girl!" he cried. "You ought to be running up on your own engine."

"Wait till I bring her home, Jim," laughed Harry, with a last wave. "It'll make a stir, that ride!"

But he little knew how sensational indeed was to be the journey back.

Out of the deserted station crawled the train, through the busy junction, with its arc lamps lighting up the shunting sidings, and so on to the main line, spinning away into the night-bound countryside.

Harry stood at the lowered window, his eyes resting fondly upon the car behind, his mind trying to overcome many vague misgivings. That car was the only one of its kind in existence. If anything happened to prevent its being exhibited at the show it would be a terrible disaster to all Jim's hopes and dreams. But could anything happen to it now—now that it had left Millton, where all the danger had lurked? Coupled to a passenger train, travelling slowly through the night, with Harry himself to guard it. What could be safer?

The night was bitter, an East wind shrilling about the train as it forged on through the darkness. Harry drew up the window, and made himself comfortable, but he had no thought of reading or dozing. Stations were few and far between, but they stopped at every one, and each time he looked out for mere precaution's sake.

Then came a stretch of mile after mile without a single station, nothing but bleak, moonlit moorland on either side of the track, with a glimpse of light ever and again as they rattled past a lonely signal-cabin. Slowly, in the solitude of his own compartment—for he had it all to himself—Harry settled down into an easier state of mind, the warmth of the heating apparatus under the seat making all so cosy that presently he nodded.

But the sudden scream of the engine's whistle, and then the grinding of brakes roused him from his lethargy. He yawned, shook himself together, and lowered the window again as the train slowed up.

There was no station here, only a red light ahead, shining brilliantly in the keen, frosty air. All was oppressively silent now that the train had stopped. What few passengers there were had evidently dropped off to sleep, and even the guard was keeping snug in his own van. The throb, throb of the Westinghouse came softly from the engine, waiting for its signal, and the biting wind whistled through the dead grass beside the line.

Harry sent a roving glance all round, marvelling at the loneliness of the moorland wastes, the brilliance of the stars overhead. Then he looked at the truck coupled on behind with its precious burden.

Still there, he thought, with a smile at his own idle fears.

But next moment that smile froze upon his lips. He caught his breath, and craned further out, his eyes dilating as they fastened upon the sinister thing that had filled him with sudden horror.

There, on the track between the rails, was a shadow cast by the moon, the shadow of his own carriage and the truck, and in between these——

Good heavens, the shadow in between was that of a man!

For one awful moment of breathless amazement he watched it with dilating eyes. Then it moved, ever so slightly, but enough to bring him to a sense of what was happening.

He leaned still farther out, straining to peer round into the space between the truck and the carriage, where the man was crouching, but it was no use. At that instant the engine whistled, and the train moved on again.

What to do? His mind was thrown out of gear. He forgot the communication cord. Wrenching open the carriage door, he sprang from the moving train on to the track, the door blowing to gently after him.

Landing all of a sprawl, he was up again in a flash. One brief glimpse he had of the uncoupled truck, standing by itself on the line, a crouching figure beside it. And then, as the figure moved to slink away, Harry sent up a cry for help, but the wind drove the sound away from the departing train, and there was no response of any kind. Here, in the midnight darkness and solitude of this bleak moorland, he was left utterly alone with a desperate character.

But he was not afraid. Straight at the scoundrel he had rushed, and now they were struggling fiercely. In the mad flurry of the savage conflict it was impossible to form any clear notion of his opponent, except that he wore a huge black beard. That might be a disguise, however, and Harry felt sure of this, as the man uttered no sound. He was afraid of betraying himself by his speech.

"Scoundrel! Cowardly brute!" choked the lad, wrenching himself free of a strangling grip upon his throat, and flinging himself upon the man once more. "I know your game! You're Carl Richel, or a hireling of his. And I've got you this time!"

Still not a sound from the man, nothing save his harsh breathing as the pair of them wrestled with each other in the four-foot way. Rage added strength to Harry's brawny arms, and the man seemed to know that he had met his match. All the time he was trying to break away for flight, the one thing that the lad had no intention of allowing. Once he had him sheer off his feet, and almost thrown, but his own foot slipped on a loose stone, and his opponent escaped for a moment, taking advantage of the brief respite to hit out and kick brutally.

Dodging the random blows, Harry got in an upper-cut that rattled the fellow's teeth, and sent him staggering back gasping. Like a flash Harry sprang to follow up his advantage, but once again the uneven, loose ground was his undoing.

He half-slipped on a stone, caught his other foot in one of the rails, and fell.

Out shot his right hand to grasp the scoundrel about one ankle, and pull him over, too. The man, however, skipped aside in the nick of time, and then absolutely jumped upon the fallen lad, kicking him in the ribs.

Harry gasped, rolled over, tried to struggle to his feet. But it was all up with him. A clenched fist was raised, and fell with a crash upon his head, half-stunning him. Another blow and another completed his defeat, and, with a low groan, he collapsed in a senseless heap between the gleaming metals.

Dead silence followed, broken only by the harsh breathing of the exhausted victor. For a minute he stood there, looking down at the lifeless form at his feet, watching for signs of returning consciousness. None came, and suddenly the scoundrel bent over his victim, lifted him easily in his arms, and flung him brutally

into the car lashed upon the railway truck.

That done, the man turned to flee, but at the track-side he noticed a gradient post. He stopped, bent to read the figures on the pointing arms, and then straightened up with a throaty laugh.

Going back to the truck, he extinguished the lamp it carried, put his shoulder to the side, and heaved and strained for all he was worth.

A moment more, and the truck began to move. With a low rumble it rolled back along the line in the direction from which it had come when coupled to the train. Faster and faster it moved as the gentle gradient gave it momentum, until at last the man who was pushing it had to run to keep up with it. Suddenly he stopped. But the truck still ran on, gaining speed at every yard—faster, faster—carrying with it the senseless form of Harry Redwin.

A fiendish laugh broke from the man as he watched the runaway bearing the lad to what was surely certain death; then he turned and ran, his sinister figure vanishing amongst the giant rocks and stunted bushes of the lonely moorland.

For Jim's Sake!

It all seemed a hideous nightmare to Harry Redwin, coming back to consciousness like one waking from a troubled sleep. Had he dozed off in the train after all, and dreamed of Carl Richel and that desperate attempt to destroy the car? But that was impossible! He was not in the train now. Something really had happened. His head was splitting. An icy wind was numbing him. He was lying in the open air. And yet——

Good heavens! If he was no longer in the train, what else was it that seemed to be bearing him along the moonlit track?

A wild cry of horror burst from him as he struggled up and peered around.

He was in the car that was roped to the railway truck, and that same truck was running back along the line—rushing to the certain destruction that lay somewhere ahead in the darkness.

His blood froze as the position came clear to him in a single flash of understanding—the uncoupling of the truck, his fight with the unknown villain. And now he had been placed on the runaway that he might be dashed to death in a collision.

"Dead men tell no tales!" A smash—a mangled, lifeless body—what would police or public ever make of that?

With a sickening feeling of despair running through him, he stood up in the body of the car and looked forward down the line. The gradient was growing steeper, and now the truck was rushing along at a speed too horrible to think of. He shut his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them again there was something even worse awaiting his horrified gaze.

Far down the line were two points of light—an engine's head-lamps—scintillating like coloured planets in the clear, frosty air.

It was another train, coming on at Heaven only knew what speed—and on the same line!

Train and truck were rushing towards each other through the night. A minute—no longer—and the truck would be smashed to matchwood by one dreadful crash which Harry could never survive.

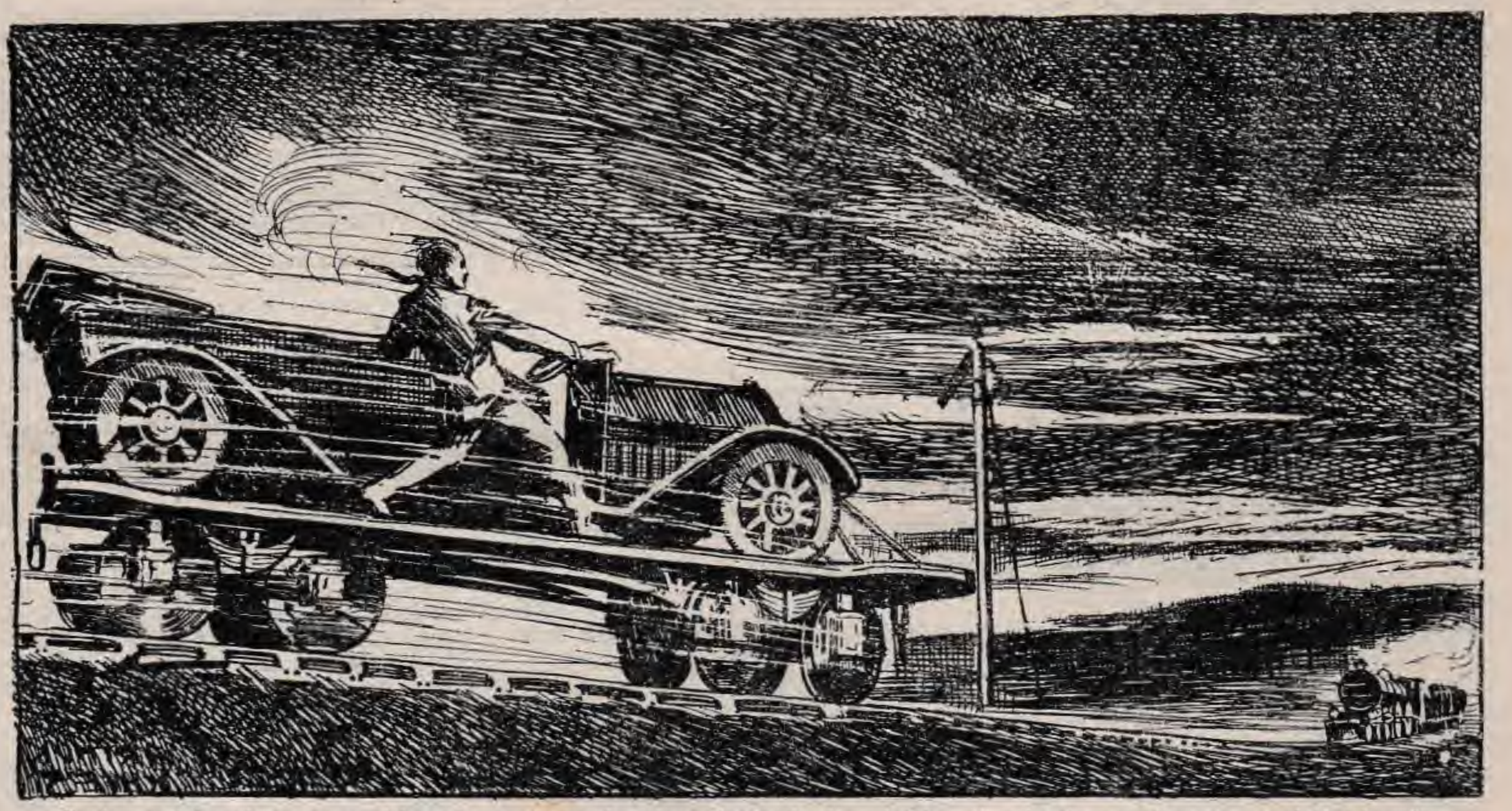
But was there no means of warning the men on the footplate? None! Clambering forward, the lad peered over, to find that the lantern was extinguished. Impossible to light it again, or to improvise any other danger signal. And there was no signal-cabin in sight.

His heart sank like a stone in his breast as he stood there, perched now on the side of the truck, his eyes fascinated by the engine's head-lights, growing every moment bigger and brighter.

In a few seconds he lived a whole lifetime, as every human being does when rushing to a violent end.

He thought of Jim, and Hetty, and the others; of his uncle, too—the man to whom he had been as devoted as any son, and it was that same man who had surely conspired to bring about this foul crime! He could not doubt it. Michael Harmon, Carl Richel—they were at the bottom of it all. Nothing had been too sacred for them in the fight for gold—not even human life itself. But when Michael Harmon learned that his own nephew had perished through this cowardly plot, surely that would be Fate's crushing victory over the schemer! And if so, then Harry felt that he would not have died in vain.

He was not going to wait for death, though. Better to risk a leap from the on-rushing truck than to be hurled into eternity when the smash came. It was a matter of moments now—no more.



Train and truck were rushing towards each other through the night. A minute—no longer—and the truck would be smashed to matchwood by one dreadful crash which Harry could never survive.

Then, in the very act of bracing himself for the terrible spring that would certainly land him with a broken neck or back, he was seized with a desperate alternative.

The brake!

He looked down. Yes, there was one, right enough—the simple brake used for shunting operations. It was worked by pressing down a long bar beside the wheels, and in the next breath Harry lowered himself by both hands and jammed both feet upon the lever.

To his dismay, the effect seemed trifling, useless. He threw his whole weight upon the bar, and still the car rushed on. And now the advancing train was so near that all around the night air was filled with the snorting of the mighty engine, belching clouds of steam and spark-laden smoke as it forged up the gradient.

With all his might Harry yelled out a warning; but the shouts of a multitude would have been lost to the driver

THE BOY BREAD-WINNER.

(Continued from the previous page.)

and fireman of that monster engine. It maddened him to feel the brakes making so little effect; and then suddenly he remembered something he had read about trains in an engineering book. A railway-brake has most effect when thrown on and off alternately.

Instantly he relieved the pressure, crashing down upon the lever a moment afterwards with all his weight. He did this again and again, and each time there was a jolt that nearly tore him from his hold. But the speed of the runaway was diminishing, and the thought came to him—could he yet avert the whole disaster by sticking there instead of jumping off?

No. He could not stop it under three hundred yards, and now only that distance separated him from the advancing train.

The smash must come, and before that he must make the leap. Not a second longer for hesitation. A gasp for breath, a thought that was a last prayer, and then——

The shriek of a whistle from the locomotive panting towards him!

That sound seemed to send the blood coursing afresh through his frozen veins. Had the truck been seen? It must have been. There came another shrill note, the hissing roar of reversed engines, the jolting crash of goods-waggons banged back on each other.

The train was stopping. Now he had only to stick to his post on the brake, and he might even save the runaway truck and its precious burden from being dashed to pieces.

All his own peril was forgotten then. To save Jim's car, that was the one frantic thought in his mind. With numbed fingers he clung to his perch, both feet working at the brake. The engine was whistling furiously as driver and fireman strove to pull up the train. Fifty yards—twenty! The smash was coming. He could see it was inevitable. But he would not jump. Every moment longer that he stayed on would lessen the speed. It was for Jim's sake—to save the car——

Crash!

It was all over. Runaway truck and mighty engine had met, buffer to buffer, and, simultaneously with the shattering shock of the collision, Harry Redwin was torn from his hold and sent hurtling through the air, to fall, with a sickening thud, within an inch of the engine's whirring wheels.

(Another thrilling instalment of this grand serial next Tuesday.)

Naval Night Hails.

In harbour at sunset in most ships the sentry on the forebridge has to fire one round of blank from his rifle, and salute the ensign as it is hauled down. After that he is moved from the bridge down on to the fo'c's'le, where his orders are slightly different. When dusk settles down, and objects in the distance are not plainly discernible, it is his duty, for one thing, to "hail"—i.e., challenge—all boats approaching the ship.

There are a proper set of answers laid down, which have to be made by the boat's occupants, according to their rank, etc. The hail is always the same—"Boat ahoy!"—yelled at the top of the sentry's voice; and when he receives the answer it is repeated to the officer of the watch, loud enough for him to hear on the quarter-deck.

If an admiral is in the boat, on being hailed his coxswain responds with "Flag," which is repeated by the sentry, who calls out: "Answers flag, sir!" When the captain of the ship is hailed his coxswain calls out the name of the ship.

Ward-room officers reply with, "Ay, ay!"—pronounced "I, I!"—and other ratings, belonging to the lower deck, "No, no!"

In the case of a boat passing, belonging to another ship, the correct answer is, "Passing."

The Land of Mystery.

A most interesting article that will particularly appeal to readers of "C.B.C," in view of our Grand New Serial, "The Forbidden Road."

A land of mystery, a land where white men tread at the risk of their lives! Such is the forbidden country of Thibet.

Some two hundred years ago Europeans could enter Thibet at will, but during the last century or so the Thibetans have refused admittance to any white man.

The Unknown Land, as Thibet is sometimes called, has always been a mystery to Europeans, and men have attempted to explore parts of the country for many centuries. Situated as it is in Central Asia, and surrounded by mountains of great height, Thibet is well hid away from the rest of the world. To get to the centre of the country, one has to traverse difficult passes.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the doors of Thibet were not closed to outsiders, a Christian mission was sent out to the mysterious country. But it only maintained a precarious existence. It existed there for about forty years.

The first British expedition was despatched to Thibet in the year 1774, for the purpose of opening up friendly relations between the country and India. This mission was received with perfect friendliness, but the seeds of understanding which were sown never grew to full maturity.

A few years later a veil fell on the mysterious land, and all foreigners were banned from the country.

Many intrepid explorers have succeeded in reaching Lhassa, the capital of Thibet, only to be sent back again by the Dalai-Lama, the chief of the priests of the town. Though many explorers succeeded in bringing back information about the country of Thibet in general, none succeeded in gaining an entry into the capital. The town, therefore, became a greater mystery than ever, and seemed to hold a greater fascination for those who explored the country.

Several of the bravest explorers have gone to the country, and never returned.

In the year 1893, a Frenchman named De Rhins got to within a week's march of Lhassa, but was there forced to return, and, after a wearisome journey, a terrible fight took place with the Thibetans. De Rhins was shot dead, and his body cast into a stream.

A few years later, Rejnhart, a Dutch missionary, with his wife and child, thought it possible to reach Lhassa by a fresh route. He did not achieve his object, however. The little party had not gone far before they encountered difficulties. They were compelled to beg food and assistance from the nomads of the country, who took objection to them, and finally the plucky missionary was murdered.

Bowser, Huc, Rockhill, Prjevalski, Chandras Das, Sven Hedin, and many other brave explorers managed to get almost to the supposed wonderful city of Lhassa, only to be turned back again. They all had to face the awful perils of the country. One and all encountered the piercing cold, and terrible, biting winds. They had to fight against sand-storms, climb over perilous sand-hills, and when provisions ran out—as they often did—it was a hard job to get fresh supplies.

It was not until the year 1904 that the mysterious city of Lhassa was entered and all its secrets unfolded. A mission under Colonel Younghusband forced its way through the country, and, after numerous engagements with the inhabitants, the capital was finally taken. Instead of a magnificent city, as it was supposed to be, the expedition found the place a scattered, unkempt, and ill-regulated town, infested with savage dogs.

The Thibetans have many weird customs. They are all devout worshippers of their god, Buddha. In Lhassa there are said to be 20,000 priests or monks. Every family is expected to dedicate at least one son to the priesthood. From this it may be gathered that, although the Thibetans are wild in their ways, they are a race devoted to their religion.

Before the god in one of the monasteries, the floor is covered with prayer-boards. These have been in constant use for hundreds of years, and deep grooves have been worn by the lamas doing penance.

Perhaps one of the weirdest customs of the Thibetans is that of cutting up the dead body of a man and giving it to savage dogs or vultures to devour.

Altogether Thibet is one of the vilest of countries—one which, I feel sure, no reader of "C. B. C." would care to live in.

The Forbidden Road.

Our Magnificent New Story of Adventure, Sport, and Army Life.

By the Authors of "The Phantom Footballer" and "Tom Truman, Amateur Boxer."

CHARACTERS IN THIS GREAT NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL.

TOM TRUMAN, a young mechanic, who has won fame as an amateur boxer. By a turn of fortune he meets with

JACK STAVELEY, the youthful owner of a big engineering works in the North. Staveley has just secured the contract for building a military road in the savage land of Thibet, and he takes Tom Truman with him to superintend the work.

JEFFREY GROOM, a cousin and enemy of Jack Staveley, is the villain of the story. He is determined to get possession of the engineering works by the death of Jack Staveley, and he secretly follows his intended victim to the Forbidden Land, meaning to stir up the tribes against the Britishers.

LIEUT. VINCENT is attached to the Southshires, a regiment that is affording military protection to the contractors.

(*Now read this week's magnificent instalment.*)

Trapped on the Mountains.

"Lift the spirit-level a bit, Tom, old man. That's it. Mind how you go, or you'll step overboard, and then I wouldn't give much for what's left of you."

Tom Truman laughed as Jack spoke, and nodded.

"Nor I," he answered, gazing down at the precipice that sloped sheer away from the narrow path cut into the side of the mountain.

Far below a torrent leaped among the boulders, looking like a thread of writhing snow. And Tom shuddered a little, and pressed back closely to the overhanging wall of rock that lay on his right; for the path was not very wide, and there were no safety-railings on that left-hand side—nothing but empty, swimming space.

"That's O. K.! We're getting on well. Vincent, how goes it?" cried Jack.

He glanced back at the slim, brown figure of the little subaltern as he spoke. But Vincent did not seem to hear him.

He was standing by the tripod-stand of a heliograph, and his eyes were glued to a pair of binoculars. He seemed to be inspecting the path along which they had made their perilous way for two miles, and Jack, after attempting in vain to attract his attention, winked at Tom, and continued his surveying operations.

It was three days after the attack of the tribesmen from the Forbidden Land, and a reconnaissance of the Southshires had shown that the enemy had apparently retired.

So Jack and his comrades had, that afternoon, slipped away from the main body of the engineers and pushed forward ahead, in order to carry on some survey operations for the next section of the road.

And now, here they were upon their narrow ledge, with a cold wind whistling by them and a radiant flood of sunlight streaming upon them.

For a time Jack and Tom worked in silence, while Lieutenant Vincent, his binoculars still at his eyes, whistled to himself, and bit his lip.

Presently Jack paused. A rapid, irregular clicking sound had caught his attention, and, glancing round, he was amazed to see Vincent working the heliograph rapidly. He stood upright, frowning.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" he asked.

For a moment there was no answer. Then at last the subaltern looked round, and Jack saw that his brown face wore a grave expression, and that his eyes were troubled.

"Come here, Jack," he said.

As Staveley obeyed, he handed over his binoculars and pointed to the thread of a path winding along the side of the precipice by which they had come.

"Look along there, and tell me what you see," he said earnestly. "I want your opinion—quick!"

With a thrill of excitement in his heart, Jack lifted the glasses and turned them in the direction indicated.

For a moment he could see nothing but blue, misty rocks. Then into the circle came a lumbering black shape, moving rapidly along the narrow ledge. And Jack started.

"Thunder! It's a bear!"

The little subaltern, who was still working the pivoted, flashing mirror of the heliograph, looked up and nodded.

"Yes; and making our way, too, Jack! We're in a corner, old chap," he said quietly. "These mountain bears are as savage as they make 'em, and it takes more than a revolver to stop 'em—even at point-blank range. He'll blunder right on to us, and it's a long drop to the bottom of the precipice."

Tom gasped. A thrill of horror went through him as he realised for the first time the terrible situation in which they were placed. And suddenly Jack, who was still peering through the glasses, cried out:

"The brute's coming nearer quickly! Another five minutes'll bring it here! My aunt, Vincent! What's to be done?"

The little subaltern stood up, and, grasping the heliograph, pointed along the path ahead.

"Only one thing, boy. We must get on ahead—quick! There's not a second to lose. We must find a way off the path before the beast catches us, or only a miracle can save us. I've been trying to call up the outposts, but they haven't seen the signal yet. Look alive! It's a case of life or death, Jack! Forward!"

Tom, glancing back, saw the lumbering black bulk of the bear waddling along the narrow path, which it filled completely. And straightway, with his heart beating wildly, he turned, snatched up his spirit-level, and led the way forward along the path, the end of which none of the three had ever seen.

Next moment they were scrambling madly forward, clinging like flies to the side of the precipice, while the black, savage death behind slowly and surely overhauled them.

The suddenness of the peril that threatened to destroy them was appalling, and for a while the three ran in silence.

To their left sloped the precipice—a sheer fall of thousands of feet. To the right was the rising wall of rock, so close that they grazed it as they ran, afraid of stepping too far to the left lest a false step should hurl them to destruction far below. And ahead, the path wound on to an unknown destination, curving this way and that round buttresses of rock.

There was no retreating, and frantically they struggled on, like flies on the side of a wall, their hearts thumping, their breath coming in great gasps, every nerve and muscle tense.

Ten minutes' progress brought them to one of the buttresses, round which the path curved and vanished, so that the next section was hidden from view. And here Tom uttered a cry of joy, for the ledge was wider, and progress more easy.

"Come on, boys! It's better here!" he yelled. And Vincent and Jack, a little in the rear, saw him vanish round the corner ahead.

Then suddenly his shout of joy changed to one of horror and consternation.

"Glory! Get back—get back!" he

was yelling at the top of his voice. "We're caught! The enemy's right ahead!"

Jack, rounding the buttress, pulled up with a jerk as he saw the cause of Tom's alarm.

Right ahead the path indeed broadened out. But not three hundred yards ahead it was already occupied by a marching line of savage, yellow-faced Mongolians, tramping towards them.

Even as Vincent came up in rear of Jack, crying that the bear was close behind, the tribesmen sighted the white invaders. The boom of a war-gong echoed in shivering vibrations over the abyss, and a musket cracked sharply as a wild, savage yell arose.

"We're done!" gasped Vincent, as he cocked his revolver. "The bear's coming round the corner!"

The Fight on the Ledge.

There was a second of tense silence, broken by the hard breathing of the three men, and the far-off roar of the foaming river.

Then from the path ahead came the sudden boom of the war-gong—a shivering, solemn note, followed by a wild scream of triumph as the leading tribesmen, swinging along in their Chinese robes, sighted their enemies.

It was succeeded almost at once by a savage sound of growling, from the left, where the narrow ledge turned the buttress corner of the rock, and then came a scuffling of claws.

The bear upon their left was very close.

Jack Staveley straightened himself, bracing his muscles for the fight to come—a fight that would surely be the most desperate and horrifying of his career. His eyes rested upon the sun-lit rock-path behind them, and he saw an inky shadow loom suddenly into sight—the lumbering shadow of the fierce mountain bear that was advancing upon them.

At that minute the tribesmen advancing at the double along the path to the right were forgotten, and not one of the three chums, standing shoulder to shoulder, with their backs against the precipice, heard the savage chorus of triumph, and the crack of an old-fashioned, long-barrelled musket, fired by the leading man of the enemy.

Lieutenant Vincent raised his revolver, sighting it over the crook of his left elbow, in order to steady it. He knew that a miss would be fatal. He must make sure of piercing the eye of the brute—and shooting with a Service revolver is not the easiest thing in the world when a man's breath is coming in gulps and his heart is thumping like a drum.

There was a pause.

Then, swaying awkwardly, and brushing against the precipice, the bear came into view round the corner, a hulking, mighty animal.

As it saw the three men before it, it halted abruptly, and a savage growl rumbled from its throat.

Jack Staveley will remember that moment all his life. He saw the fierce eyes of the brute, flaming like rubies amid a tangled growth of matted hair; he saw the humped shoulders, and the thick, strong forelegs, with the claw-armed paws, scraping at the stone ledge.

Then coolly and steadily the khaki-clad figure of Lieutenant Vincent stepped forward to meet the animal, and the revolver was steadied again over the crooked arm.

It was at that critical moment that a dazzling idea flashed into Jack's mind. He saw that Vincent, having fired, was prepared to close with the bear—to sacrifice his own life for the sake of his two chums; he would fire his shot, and closing with the animal, trust to luck to hurl it—and himself—from the ledge to fearful death below.

But Jack Staveley, even as a word of warning burst from his lips, caught sight of the heliograph instrument, leaning upon the ledge against the precipice beside Lieutenant Vincent. At that instant his plan formed itself in his mind, and he darted out his hand, seized the tripod-stand of the heliograph, and swung the mirror towards the bear.

For a wild second his fingers blundered with the mirror. He trembled with eagerness and excitement. Then the bear growled again, and lumbered forward; and at the same instant Jack tilted the mirror, so that the sunlight fell upon it, directing a dazzling, blinding ray full into the beast's eyes.

The flash of the helio at short range is blinding. The glaring beam struck full in the bear's eyes, and caused it to halt, growling terrifically as it swayed its head this way and that, and tried to avoid the flash.

"Now!" yelled Jack, tilting the mirror still, so that the flash was directed steadily upon the bear's head.

Then Tom Truman, staring in petrified astonishment, cried aloud. For Lieutenant Vincent stepped forward as Jack shouted, and with superb pluck walked right up to the bear, his revolver raised, and one hand resting against the precipice wall.

Then he pulled the trigger, and stepped back.

Crack!

The shot rang out clearly, echoing over the gorge. A puff of blue smoke floated up. At the same instant the bear roared horribly, rising to its full height, and beating the air savagely. Flakes of blood-stained foam flew from its open mouth. It staggered, slipped and scraped desperately with its claws at the stone ledge.

Coolly Vincent pulled his trigger again, firing at point-blank range at the brute's muzzle; while Truman sprang forward, shouting a warning to Jack Staveley.

"The enemy are close—look out!" he yelled.

"The bear!" roared Jack.

Even as he spoke the bear toppled, slipped from the ledge, and then vanished, falling downwards at a sickening speed from the ledge.

The three men had a glimpse of its black body lessening in size as it plunged into the abyss to death.

Then Tom Truman pushed Jack forward, and stretching out his arm, at imminent danger of falling from the ledge, snatched the revolver from the officer's hand, and faced round.

"Run, you chaps—quick!" he roared. "The tribesmen are on us!"

As he spoke Lieutenant Vincent glanced back. He had a vision of a yellow-clad Mongolian, with shaggy black hair, and gleaming, almond eyes, bearing upon Tom. Then the young civilian raised his hand and pulled the trigger, and the crack of the third shot echoed sharply over the rocks.

With a wail of pain and fear the Mongolian threw up his arms, pitching head first from the ledge; at the same moment, Jack urged Vincent forward, crying to him to run.

"It's the only chance, man!" he yelled. "Tom will hold 'em off for a moment—he's safe at present."

Unwilling though he was to leave the post of danger, Lieutenant Vincent turned and ran round the corner of the ledge, followed by Jack.

At the same moment Tom Truman, standing alone to cover the retreat of his chums, fired the fourth shot.

It was directed at a tall lama, or priest, armed with a long-barrelled gun. It found its billet, and the priest sprawled head-first forward, blocking the path for a moment, while the tribesmen yelled ferociously in his rear.

Buzz! A bullet sang past Tom's ears, and he ducked, and, shaken by his escape, lost his head for a moment. Without thinking of the consequences of his action, he pulled the trigger of his revolver twice, firing his last two rounds.

Both of the bullets found targets amid the mob of half-Chinese savages advancing along the path; but even as a yell of rage and terror rose from those who had been hit, Tom realised that he was left without ammunition. And, as yet, Vincent and Jack Staveley could not be far off. They had not gained sufficient ground.

Tom Truman groaned, facing the enemy, who hesitated for a moment, fearing that deadly revolver.

There was a pause, as they clustered upon the ledge in single file, fearing to advance and overwhelm the dauntless white man.

Then from the rear came the sinister boom and clang of the war-gong, beaten by one of the priests; and at that the leading tribesman gathered his courage, and sprang forward, bearing straight at Tom. The latter flung up his hand, and, taking the revolver by the barrel, crashed it straight at his opponent, dodging a thrust with a curved knife as he did so.

But the tribesman—a powerfully-built man, of middle height—was ready for the move. With a grunt he caught the blow upon his arm. Tom felt his wrist seized and twisted with ferocious strength, and he was swung half off the ledge.

In desperation, with one foot overhanging the terrible abyss, he was forced to drop his revolver, and clutch at the robes of his opponent. There was a wild moment of savage fighting upon that narrow ledge—hand-to-hand struggling, with heaving chests and straining muscles.

Then Tom wrenched his left arm free, and drew it back. He was a boxer, was Tom Truman. In England he had almost earned the title of amateur champion, and now, in this savage corner of the world, his knowledge stood him in good stead. With a grunt he drove his left fist straight beneath the Mongolian's chin, jerking back the man's head.

The tribesman uttered a gurgling cry, and staggered back, releasing his hold upon the white man. Then Tom slashed in with his right, straight from the shoulder, taking the man heavily upon the jaw.

He felt his fist crash home, and he laughed joyously, with surging memories of many a well-fought ring fight in his mind. Then he had a vision of the Mongolian tottering, and of two more tribesmen rushing to his support.

Realising that for a moment the savages would be unable to pass their comrade on the narrow path, Tom swung round, his duty nobly done, and, clenching his fists, rounded the buttress

The three Britishers were in a tight corner. In front of them the hideous figure of a bear was gradually drawing nearer; behind, a crowd of furious Tibetans were advancing. What would their fate be?

of rock, and made off along the ledge at full speed.

The Dens of Death.

Tom Truman ran like the wind, careless of his foothold. His heart thumped; his breath came in great gasps as his chest heaved.

Ahead of him, at a distance of two hundred yards or so, he could see the racing figures of Jack Staveley and Lieutenant Vincent. Behind him he knew that, ere many moments were gone, the Mongolians would be pouring!

Yet he realised that the tribesmen would by no means have matters all their own way. They, too, must come along the ledge in single file, and the pace of the whole company of them must be the pace of their leading man. It was a strange position.

Had it not been that the tribesmen were armed to the teeth, the plight of the three Britons would not have been desperate. But as it was Tom had lost Vincent's revolver.

There was nothing for it but to run—and run he did. Presently he heard the ominous clang of the war-gong behind. He glanced over his shoulder. The tribesmen were swarming along the ledge at last. Even as he looked a puff of blue smoke drifted up from them, and the crack of a shot reached his ears. Then he looked straight ahead once more, and shouted.

For Jack Staveley and Lieutenant Vincent had halted, and were beckoning to him. He waved his hand to urge them on, thinking that they had decided to make a last stand—not knowing that the revolver was lost. But they did not move, and when at length he dashed up to them, Jack Staveley darted forward, pointing to the left.

"Quick!" he said. "There's a buttress corner just ahead. Vincent has gone round there and found a way down the cliff—there's a sort of crack in the precipice. We're going to try that. We can get down before these fellows see us"

"Why not go straight on?" gasped Tom; and Staveley shook his head.

"As we ran the regiment at the base have been flag-wagging. Vincent could just see the signals. There's a regiment of the tribesmen ahead, cutting us off. Our chaps are out after 'em; but at present we're jolly well caught! Come!"

As he spoke Jack was pulling Tom forward. They rounded a further buttress, and, for the moment, were out of view of the oncoming tribesmen. Then Tom saw the path that Vincent's keen eyes had discerned. It made him feel sick.

It was a mere crack in the grim wall of the precipice, leading sheer down perhaps to nothingness. Yet, as Tom stared down, and saw Vincent slowly climbing, clinging with all his strength to the rocks, like a fly on a wall, he realised that the crack did seem to grow wider, ere it was hidden by the outward bulge of the cliff face.

It was a small chance that this offered a place of hiding. But even small chances had to be taken. Suddenly, too, Vincent cried out from below, gazing up at them with a smile from the shadow of his helmet.

"Quick, boys; there's a cave!" he gasped. "A regular honeycomb in the precipice! Down you come! For Heaven's sake, though, hold tight!"

"Your turn, Tom!"

Jack pushed his chum forward. Tom, realising that there was no time for hesitation, nodded, knelt on the ledge, fastening his fingers firmly over the edge, and lowered himself into space. For one awful second he hung there, swinging, while his head whirled at the thought of the drop below. Then his feet found the narrow split. He scraped with his boots for a foothold, and, with every nerve tense, began his descent. Ere he had climbed two feet Jack followed, for he knew that the pursuing enemy must be close.

There followed a tense moment of scrambling, of grim clinging with aching, burning fingers to the gritty rock, of occasional glimpses of the abyss that seemed to sail far below. Then the two reached the outward bulge of rock. For one moment they were hanging over sheer nothingness. Then Vincent guided their feet to safety.

Even as the war-gong boomed directly overhead, they found themselves standing in the mouth of a honeycomoed cave, or tunnel, that seemed to go far back into the precipice.

"Safe!" gasped Jack, leaning against the rock, and staring grimly below. "By thunder, Vincent, but I wouldn't do that climb again for a lot! And we've got to climb back some time."

Vincent shook his head.

"No, boys. It's ten to one that the tribesmen know this way down far better than we do. I tell you they'll be after us soon. We'll have to hold the cave somehow."

"I've lost the revolver!" groaned Tom. "There's no holding the cave for us, Vincent!"

The three men gazed at each other in consternation. From above came the sudden uproar of chattering voices. There was a crying out, and a sudden scuffling. Vincent started, as a shadow fell athwart the rocks.

"By James, they're after us already! Of course, they're trained trackers, some of 'em!" he gasped, in a low voice. "I say, this is the climax, you chaps!"

He turned, and pushed his way into the tunnel. It was pitch dark, and a fœtid odour filled the nostrils of his comrades as they followed him. Vincent quickened his pace, feeling his way with both hands outstretched. In a low, eager voice, he called to the others to follow closely.

The tunnel led on, sloping downward, into the very bowels of the mountain as it seemed, away from the circle of light that marked the entrance.

The air became closer, and the fœtid smell more pronounced. But it was no time to be critical. The three pushed on, for behind them they could hear the hum of voices. And, suddenly, the entrance was darkened by the figures of at least two pursuers.

Then it was that Vincent, who had noticed that the tunnel was honeycombed with the mouths of what seemed to be similar tunnels in various places, cried out. He stopped so abruptly that Jack and Truman crashed into him, and for a moment the three of them were sprawling in the darkness upon the floor. It was that fact alone which probably saved their lives.

For, suddenly, from the unseen mouth of a tunnel on their left, hidden in the darkness, burst a new and awful chaos of sound—a savage growling, thunderous and fear-inspiring.

Through the blackness Tom Truman had a brief glimpse of two gleaming eyes, and something huge and hairy crashed over him in a ponderous leap. There came a thud upon the path behind, and a patter of clawed feet.

The sound grew more distant in the darkness, and then came a growling, fierce and terrible, followed by a scream of mortal agony from the direction of the mouth of the honeycomb tunnel.

At the same moment a red flash lit up the rocks momentarily, showing the rugged walls of the cave, and the crash of the musket-shot was followed by a wild sound of struggling.

"By thunder!" gasped Vincent. "The bears—they've got hold of the enemy!"

Jack Staveley staggered to his feet, his heart throbbing wildly.

"There's no going back!" he panted. "We're cut off! What next?"

Vincent moved forward.

"We must go on! It's our only hope. The bears must have had some way out. They could never climb the precipice face. Quick!"

So saying, he led the way, and the two civilians followed, pushing their way desperately through the fœtid darkness, now bumping into unseen rocks, now feeling gaps of honeycomb tunnels on either side.

They were in pitch darkness, lost in the bowels of the mountains. But the path on which they were moving sloped downwards, and they followed it blindly.

For what seemed an age they struggled on, their chests heaving, their throats parched. Then Tom Truman cried out.

"Look to the left!" he yelled. "For Heaven's sake, run! We're in a colony of the beasts!"

As he spoke Jack gasped. For in the darkness to the left he could make out red eyes.

He could hear the shuffling of heavy bodies, and there came a fierce growling and snarling, and the thud of heavy paws.

There followed a sobbing bark, as of a jackal, and Vincent tripped over something which clattered. Stooping, he placed his hand on dry bones, the skeleton of a beast.

Even as he did so, Truman grasped that the bears were behind, following. And the three men broke into a run in the darkness, clattering down the unseen path that was flanked on every side by death.

It was a desperate run for dear life. Jack remembered crashing into a projection of rock, and half-tripping over Vincent. Then, suddenly, the lieutenant uttered a cry of joy.

Right ahead was a small circle of dazzling light—the end of the tunnel, leading to the open air. And the three men made for it at top speed, bending low, for the tunnel grew narrower. Behind them the bears padded heavily, evidently puzzled, but pursuing the intruders relentlessly.

Faster grew the pace. There was a moment of wild scrambling over loose stones and rubble. Then, with a great cry of relief, the three stumbled out into the light, amid boulders and loose rocks, and, without a pause, dashed on, realising that death lay behind.

For a few minutes they ran hard. Then, looking back, Jack saw that the bears, for reasons of their own, had given up the chase. He called a halt, and he and his two chums flung themselves down, bruised and bleeding and breathless. And there they lay for a while, in utter exhaustion.

Presently, however, Vincent looked up, gazing around him.

"Boys," he said, "look here! That tunnel has brought us back on to the plateau—look!"

He pointed to the right over a rocky plain. Far off smoke rose from camp fires, and the thud of a blasting charge came faintly to their ears.

"The camp's over there—five miles I make it! I say, this may be useful, this tunnel. Wait, while I make a map before we move on!"

He pulled a sketch-book and pencil from his tunic, and, resting the book on one knee, made careful drawings for a while, noting the bearings of the place keenly. Then, at length, he stood up, and was joined by Truman and Staveley.

"Now," he said, "we'd best make for the camp. The regiment may be in action before long."

With that, he strode off quickly, and the others fell in step beside him. It was a weary journey over the plain, through the scorching sun, which was always hot during the day. Several times the three had to rest. And so it was not until two hours later that they entered the camp.

Then they found the Southshires were just tramping in again—a long khaki column, from the puttees of which the dust rolled up in dun clouds. The Ghurkas were staying out on outpost duty. But, for the present, the tribesmen appeared to have retreated, making their way back to the foot of the mysterious mountain, the gate to their forbidden land.

So that Vincent made a report of his experiences, and then turned in for a welcome rest, since there seemed to be nothing doing just then.

(This thrilling adventure tale will be continued in next Tuesday's "C.B.C.")

The Power of the Eye.

How far off can you recognise your friends?

If you have good eyesight, you should be able to distinguish someone, whose figure and manner of walking you know intimately, at anything up to five hundred feet. The less thoroughly acquainted you are with the person, the shorter the distance at which you will recognise him.

A trained rifleman can distinguish the different parts of his adversary's body at about three hundred feet, and will notice a movement of the limbs at twice that distance. At six hundred yards a moving individual, to the naked eye, is merely a blur on the landscape.

Dwellers in towns, of course, have lost much of this power of distant vision, while those who live out in the open country or by the sea may be able to exceed most of the above figures.

Snubbed by the School.

This Week's Grand Long Complete School Tale.

Specially Written for "C.B.C." by ALFRED JUDD.

The knotted towels were still being whirled unmercifully at Elmer, when a stalwart figure came thudding to his rescue.

CHAPTER I.
The Gipsy Schoolboy.

"A gipsy! All rot, Gliss! You do get hold of ideas!"

"Well, and why not?" retorted Glisson. "Nobody knows anything for certain about this Elmer chap, except that he won a scholarship from a secondary school, and so came to Lavington. Why shouldn't my notion be a right one?"

The conversation was taking place in the boys' common-room of Grey's House, at Lavington. It was the afternoon of the Rugger match with the Blue Albions, and a few fellows had gathered here before going down to the field. Manning lifted the lid of a desk thoughtfully, and then let it down with a bang.

"Hang it, Gliss," cried he, "there may be something in what you say! Anyhow, Elmer admits himself that he got into his last school through the charity of some outside person who, I suppose, thought that he was worth educating. And then, his skin's so jolly dark that we've sometimes thought he must be a foreigner. That fits in with your notion, too."

"I'd bet almost anything," declared Glisson again, "that this Elmer is somehow connected with those gipsies whom I spotted camping on my father's——"

"'Sh!" whispered another boy sharply. "Here is Elmer! Now's your chance, Glisson, if you want to settle the point."

A figure clad for football had just looked into the room, and was about to hurry away again, when Glisson sang out:

"Half a second, Elmer! There's a little question we'd like to ask you."

Glisson, who had lately been made a monitor, spoke with his usual air of authority.

Elmer moved slowly up the room, a dogged frown on his dusky features. Ever since coming to Lavington, he had suffered a good many snubs from Glisson and his friends, and he expected something of the sort now.

"Hope you won't mind my asking," drawled Glisson, "but during the holidays a party of gipsies encamped on a part of my father's land, without permission. I strolled round to have a gaze at them, and on one of the yellow vans I saw a name painted. It was 'Eli Elmer.'"

A flush showed deeply through the brown skin of the waiting boy.

"Well?" he managed to mutter.

Glisson smiled.

"We just wondered, that was all, whether you happened to know Eli Elmer?"

"Yes," came the distinct answer; "I know him very well. He's my father!"

There was a little gasp among the group. None of them had expected that Elmer would "own up" like that, without hesitation. Even Glisson had no instant retort ready.

"Well," demanded Elmer, his black eyes glowing, "is there anything else you want to know?"

"Oh, no—no thanks!" came the scoffing answer. "That's quite enough for us to go on with, thank you!"

Elmer, uttering not another word, turned on his heel, and marched swiftly out of the room.

Those remaining gaped blankly upon each other.

Lavington School, counted only a little less old than the hills among which it stood, boasted a proud history, yet among its scholars to-day was the son of a wandering vagrant—a gipsy!

"What's to be done?" began Glisson. But Manning had suddenly jumped to his feet.

"That's a point to settle later," declared he. "If we stay here jawing any longer, we shall miss 'Kick-off,' for a cert. Come along, everybody!"

Sulkily, Glisson joined the throng, which trooped at once to the field. So much was his importance upset by what he had heard, that even a big school match had lost its full attraction, especially when he remembered that the son of Eli Elmer, a vandweller, was about to play for Lavington!

For young Elmer's ability at Rugger, learnt at his previous school, had been recognised at once, and from the House side he had gone quickly into the Fifteen.

"Wonder if it's true?" murmured Bradshawe. "I heard that Dutton was going to stick Nigel in the crush, and let Elmer take the left-wing. Hallo, here they come!"

There was a round of welcoming applause as the two teams took the field, and it was soon seen that Bradshawe had heard aright. Elmer was placed at left-wing, to work with the skipper himself.

"It's a mistake, anyhow!" snorted Manning. "Nigel's much too light for the crush, and the Elmer fellow certainly isn't quick enough for the wing."

However, it was on the score of quickness that "the Elmer fellow" had always shone, and this match had not gone far before it was clear that wing was the very place for him.

At half-time the School led by eight points, and Elmer had scored twice.

But the Blue Albions had come out to-day determined not to be beaten. They were in the District League, and three years in succession they had been in a Cup Final. It would cost their dignity too much to lose to a boys' team.

With the ball off again, the Albion forwards worked grandly, presenting a strong front which moved down the field and swept the School crush to one side. There was a stiff fight within the twenty-five, but the School never really got on the ball, and the enemy secured their try and an easy goal.

With the leather going again, the whole brunt of the play soon fell on the School three-quarter line, and for

"We are looking for a boy named Elmer," said Glisson. "He is wanted on a charge of theft." "We ain't shielding anybody," answered the gipsy gruffly.

full five minutes it may be said that these four fellows, helped by their half-backs, kept at bay the full charge of the enemy.

Dutton and Arrowsmith, the two centre players, had been working like young giants, and were bathed in sweat. They were being simply worn away, and their right-wing was in no better condition.

The skipper got the ball out to Elmer at last, and he saved his side from dire calamity at the most painful period of the game.

With unexpected energy, Elmer rushed the field, taking the ball right through himself, having no comrade, indeed, in a safe position to pass to.

Three times in succession this seemed to happen, amid the delighted roars of the school, for every time it looked as though the boy was bound to score. But that was next to impossible, for he was either flung down heavily at the last moment, still hugging the ball, or else his long pass was easily intercepted.

The bright few moments the boy had provided, however, were of immense value, for the rest of the Schoolites had pulled together a bit, and it was also suddenly discovered that the forwards had found new life.

From that moment onwards the fight became one of the fiercest on record, and there was even greater vigour after the Albionites had notched a try, which they failed to convert.

Scores were now equal. In the fifteen minutes left to play, both sides were grimly determined both to score themselves and to prevent their opponents from doing the same thing.

The hullabaloo at five minutes to time was utterly deafening.

"Get on, lads—get on!" from the townsmen, who favoured the Albion. "A draw's no game! Rush 'em, Albion! On 'em!"

And, droning through this, was Lavington's constant, unwavering cry of:

"Up, Scho-o-o-ol! Up, Scho-o-o-ol! Up, Scho-o-o-ol!"

Again Elmer was cheered to the echo, for the boy's wiry speed had not lessened one whit; indeed, if anything, he was too fast for his fellows, with the result that his passes back were repeatedly missed.

The Albionites combined again, and rushed the field to the twenty-five line. Dutton knew by instinct that it must now be defence, not defiance, and he shouted a warning word.

Excitement grew as the leather came out to Albion's half-back, and he slung to the right-wing. The latter, save for the back, had a clear, short run to goal.

As the town lungs roared aloud, Elmer made a fast dart, and just reached his man, being simply dashed aside. However, with great nimbleness, he kept his feet and sprang again, grabbing the man's arm. This time he was flung almost viciously, and as he fell full-length, his right leg shot out, and the enemy came down a cropper.

And now there was a din indeed, putting all previous noises right out of count. The townsmen rose in their strength, almost bursting the ropes, and howling:

"Foul! Foul!"

As for the Lavington boys, they stared aghast and uttered not a word, wondering desperately if the visitors were shouting the truth.

The referee, a stranger approved of by both sides, had run to the spot. There was a short discussion, Elmer having already spoken to the man he had upset. The panic lasted for about a minute, and those near enough to hear passed the news swiftly around.

Elmer had instantly apologised, and the referee was satisfied that it was not an intentional trip. Also, he had granted an extra three minutes' play, to make up for the delay.

But nothing came of that. The whistle trilled for a draw, and then it was that the townsmen leapt the barriers and came surging across the field.

"Look out!" roared Dutton, scenting danger. "Bunch up, sharp, and off the ground!"

With Elmer in their midst, the home team hurried towards the pavilion, and a host of alert schoolboys, racing the townspeople, ringed staunchly about the Fifteen.

Thus the mob was outwitted; but, failing to get at the offending "wing," they continued to bawl "Foul!" at the top of their voices.

Certainly, so far as Lavington games were concerned, it was the stormiest finish on record.

CHAPTER II.
Running the Gauntlet.

Called together by Glisson, there was a lively muster of Grey's House that evening in the common-room, the only five boys not concerned in the affair being Glisson's fellow-monitors.

These were keeping aloof.

The room was already prepared for what was to come. A long alley composed of forms ran down the centre, and behind these, in two lines, ranged all Glisson's followers, in the hand of each a towel with a knotted end.

Only one of the boys present did not take his place in these lines, and that was Drummond, who played half-back for the Fifteen. He was squatting on a desk at the rear.

"Look here, Gliss!" warned Drummond, at the outset. "If you don't manage to keep these doings jolly

With a desperate dash Elmer sprang at his man. He was flung almost viciously away, and as he fell, his right leg shot out and the enemy came a cropper. "Foul! Foul!" roared a section of the crowd.

quiet, you'll let us all in for a worse time with Grey than you can possibly give to young Elmer."

"That's all right!" snorted Glisson. "There's a masters' meeting in School House, I tell you, and Grey certainly won't be back here till seven. As for you, you might jolly well join us, for you know as well as anybody that those town chaps were right. It was a foul—a desperate foul!"

"I know better than anybody else that it was not a foul!" was the dogged answer. "Hang it, oughtn't I to know? I was right behind Elmer when it happened. He was simply knocked off his feet, his legs shooting out, just as yours would have done. It was a pure accident."

"Accident be hanged!" blared Manning. "It was the most fearful foul I've ever seen. There isn't a fellow in the school but what thinks so, though he mayn't always admit it. Come on, Gliss, have the beggar in!"

Word was sent to the dining-hall at once, and next minute Elmer was ushered in between Bradshawe and another. He was brought to face Glisson.

"I don't know," began the latter, with a sneer, "whether such as you can understand how Lavington is disgraced by what happened to-day on the field. Anyhow, a fellow in our Fifteen has never been charged with playing foul before. You've simply wrecked our good name!"

"Who says it was a foul?" demanded Elmer, his fiery glance darting from one to the other.

"The townees said so," flung back Bradshawe. "And although we denied it to them we tell you straight that we are fully of the same opinion. You've rotted the School, and you've rotted the House, and the House is going to rattle you for it!"

Elmer's fists clenched.

"Well, go on!" he said grimly.

"You've got to run the gauntlet between these forms six times!" took up Glisson. "Come along, in you go!"

"Not I!" cried Elmer. "If you ——"

But his oppressors, by this time, were pouncing full upon him, and, instead of talking, he put up those knuckles of his, and hit madly out.

For a few moments there was wild disorder. Drummond, perched back upon the desks, simply gloated over the scene, for there was nothing he loved more than to see one game fellow put up a determined fight against impossible odds.

Like a human firework, for full three minutes, the boy smote right and left, getting in stinging knocks, and tearing himself again and again from the clutches of the dozen who tried to hold him.

Of course, it could not last long. They picked him bodily up at length, and dropped him in between one end of the forms.

"Now, then!" roared Glisson, his forehead burning from a blow. "Get up, and run! Get up, I say!"

He lashed at the crouching boy with his knotted towel, and those near followed suit.

Elmer sprang up, and ran. For in such a position, goaded in that way, he was almost bound to run.

To run, however, was not to escape, for the towel-knots cracked cruelly upon him all down the line, and a cross-form at the bottom prevented him from dashing through. After a fighting moment or so, he was compelled to plunge around, and charge back.

Five times thus he ran the painful gauntlet, crashing to the floor after the fifth rush, and failing to get up.

"Come on!" stormed Glisson. "No shirking! Once more! Have him up, boys!"

The knots at that end were wet through, being purposely dipped in water, and they cut madly into Elmer's back and shoulders. Smarting from blows received in the opening skirmish, the boy's tormentors were doubly keen upon giving him his full dose.

Glisson rushed to that end.

"Haul him up, lads—haul him up!" clamoured he. "Here, let me come! Now then, I say—now then!"

Two cruel cuts went singing into Elmer's cheek, and the knotted cloth was swinging again, when a heavy body came thudding into the lines.

It was Drummond. Ceasing to be a spectator merely, he had smashed through, and had snatched Glisson's weapon from his grasp.

"Gliss, you idiot!" stormed he. "Can't you see that the chap has had enough? Do you jolly well want to choke him? Foul or no foul, he's had as much as he can stand, and that's enough!"

Glisson was no craven. He stood up to the other at once.

"Get out of this, Drummond, or I'll pitch you out!" he glared. "Six

runs is the sentence, and six there's going to be! Let me have that towel, or——"

He made a snatch as he spoke, but Drummond, dodging aside, let him have the knot on his cheek.

After that, for many breathless minutes, confusion reigned again. Drummond dropped the towel, and used his fists like a Briton. Elmer he got somehow to his feet, and shouted for him to rush for the door.

Elmer rushed at last, with his unexpected champion following up. And after Elmer had dived through, Drummond made a sort of last stand at the exit, flinging back a couple of pursuers, and slamming the door in their faces.

"Up the stairs!" was the order, then: "Sharp's the word!"

A few moments later the pair of them were safe from all assault, securely locked in Drummond's study.

CHAPTER III.
In Fear of Disgrace.

Drummond's friendliness towards Elmer, thus started, steadily continued through the weeks that followed.

Elmer, by habit, said very little, and no one slightly guessed the tremendous sense of gratitude which he felt towards the one fellow who had doggedly believed in him. But he proved that gratitude in a most startling manner.

Some weeks short of the Easter holidays Drummond fell ill. The last House match, played in sleet and rain, had resulted in an attack of influenza, and the half-back found himself laid up in the sanatorium.

Elmer was the first who got leave to see him, and it was while he sat by the bedside chatting that their Housemaster appeared—Mr. Grey.

"You need not go, Elmer," began the master, "for I've only come to ask a question." Then, to Drummond: "I'm sorry to bother you, but the sports boxes are going to be opened, and Dutton has been to ask me about yours. May I take it from the desk in your study?"

Drummond, lying in bed, was already pale, and now he seemed to go decidedly paler.

"But I—I don't understand, sir!" he blurted out. "The boxes are never opened until after Easter!"

"Not as a rule. But we have decided to get things settled up earlier this year. You don't mind my going to your study desk—eh?"

"N-no, sir!"

"That's all. Thanks!"

The master hurried out with a nod, having noticed nothing at all queer in Drummond's manner. But Elmer had noticed, and he wondered what was up.

He knew that the other acted as treasurer for the sports subscriptions handed in by the fellows of Grey's House, and that this money went into a kind of official money-box, which was opened twice a year.

Drummond was as white as the counterpane, and suddenly he thrust himself up on one elbow.

"Great powers!" he whispered. "I'm done!"

"What d'you mean? What is it?" demanded the other.

"The subs. There should be two pounds fifteen shillings in that box. They will only find the fifteen shillings!"

"But why? I don't understand!"

"Because the two pounds aren't there. I—I borrowed them!" Drummond sank back on the pillow with a sort of groan. "Don't you see?" he plunged on. "The boxes have never before been opened till after Easter, and I felt I was safe. I was certain to get that two quid when I went home for the hols. But now——" Drummond set his teeth, and dug hard at the pillow. "I shall be booted out for a certainty. I—I don't know how I shall face my pater!"

"But I can't think how you managed," thrust in Elmer, a paleness on his own brown features. "Isn't the slide at the bottom of the box, by which the money is taken out, always sealed over with a strip of paper, on which the sports-master puts his signature? Surely, if you broke that——"

"I didn't break it. I managed to peel it off quite whole, and after Easter, having put back the two pounds, I should have stuck the paper on again. But now—— I suppose Grey has found out by now what has happened, and to-night he'll write to my pater! It's a gone case for me!"

Elmer jumped to his feet, and paced the room.

"But, look here!" he burst out, at last. "You didn't mean to steal the money. You only meant to borrow ——"

"No good!" was the hopeless retort. "They won't believe that. Why should they?"

"Then——" Elmer paused in his speech, and also in his movement. A light flashed into his eyes, a sudden, strong determination. He moved swiftly towards the bed.

"Drummond," he whispered tensely, "I believe I can save you!"

Drummond stared.

"What do you mean?" he muttered. "How can you possibly——"

"Never mind! Leave it to me. I am going to shift the suspicion from you entirely, and you must find some chance later to return this money which you have used. All you will need to do, no matter what you hear, is to keep absolutely silent! You understand?"

"Yes; but——"

"I mustn't stay. You've stood staunch by me in face of all, and now I'm going to pay back a little, and I am doing it willingly. But you must return the money. Good-bye!"

Elmer gripped Drummond's hand, and next minute he was gone.

Drummond was left in complete puzzlement, and he wondered and wondered till his head ached. How could Elmer possibly save him? The Housemaster, by this time, would have found that the money was short, and

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But all the worrying in the world would not clear matters, so there was nothing for him to do but to await whatever came.

CHAPTER IV.
In Pursuit of the Runaway.

Mr. Grey, on leaving the sanatorium, had found it snowing thickly, and, hurrying down the path, already carpeted with white, he turned towards his own House, and there climbed briskly to Drummond's study.

Events followed each other quickly. Finding that the sports box had been meddled with, he took it to his own room, and was there assured, to his amazement, that some of the contents had been removed. He was still deep in troubled thought when, ten minutes later, there was a knock at the door.

Glisson appeared.

"I've come to say, sir, that a boy is missing from preparation—Elmer. He failed to answer his name, and he is not to be found anywhere in the house!"

"Elmer!" Mr. Grey started.

The master's glance fell on the opened sports box, and then swiftly his brain connected the two ideas. Was it possible—— The master did not finish that query, not even to himself; but he told Glisson sharply to come with him to Elmer's study.

The latter was found to be in its usual order. Elmer did not possess a desk of his own, but there was a small table before the window, with two shallow drawers in it. Mr. Grey pulled out these, one after the other, and in the second of them he came upon something which drew forth an exclamation.

What Mr. Grey had found was evidently the strip of paper from the sports box, torn in half!

In a few seconds Glisson was in possession of the facts.

"One is compelled," concluded the master, "to believe that Elmer, some time during Drummond's illness, has extracted some of the box's contents, making the mistake of keeping this piece of damaging evidence!"

"And now, sir," began Glisson, "do you suppose——"

"Don't you see," went on the master rapidly, "Elmer happened to be sitting by Drummond's bedside when I called to say that the boxes were to be opened, and no doubt he suddenly took fright, fearful lest his misdeed should be proved to him!"

"And you think, sir, he has now run away?"

Mr. Grey made an urgent gesture of assent.

"He must be followed at once! He has not had a very considerable start, and it is our duty——" The speaker halted a moment. "Yes," he added rapidly; "call out all the monitors from preparation, save one. Tell them quietly to come to my study at once. Be quick, Glisson!"

For the next six or seven minutes there was a determined bustling, and then five monitors, well protected from the weather, issued from Grey's House, and turned off their different ways.

It was not altogether a dark evening, for the late snowfall had ceased. The country everywhere stretched away beneath a mantle of dim purity.

Two boys—Glisson and Locke—had been chosen for the track over the common, directly away from the town. They soon found that extreme speed was impossible, owing to the heavy "going." By the time these two had climbed to the heath-track their boots were clogged with snow, and their light raincoats seemed a deal too heavy for them.

"A wild goose chase, surely!" panted Locke, when they had struggled for upwards of a mile. "We've got simply nothing to go upon! How——"

"We must make inquiries," gave back Glisson, "of anybody we happen to meet. Now that we're sent we must do our best to nab the fellow, though, for my part, I'm not particularly anxious about it. Good riddance, say I!"

"Well, I'll own I'm a bit surprised

(*Continued on page 34.*)

The Submarine Battle.

Number One of a Great New Series of Thrilling Complete Stories.

Specially Written for "C.B.C.")

Telling of Professor Steel's Thrilling Adventures in His Marvellous Submarine, "The Phantom."

CHAPTER I.
The Old Professor.

"What's the time, Jim? Don't stare in that sleepy fashion! Look lively, and tell me the time."

Professor Steel's voice rose to a roar of anger, and he thumped a mighty fist upon his desk, so that the reading-lamp jumped, and a valuable china ornament rolled over.

With a gesture of impatience the professor seized the article and flung it into the fireplace, where it broke with a crash into a hundred pieces. Then he leaped up again, as his nephew, Jim Gordon, rose slowly from the cosy armchair in which he was installed.

"Great powers, boy! Have you no respect for your uncle? What's the time?"

Jim Gordon smiled pleasantly, and a light of amusement sprang into his blue eyes. He was used to the ways of his uncle, and knew that Professor Steel had nothing but the kindest and best feelings for him.

His bellowing and rudeness were but outward show; in reality the huge man, with the great forehead, and the beard that bristled fiercely upon the front of his waistcoat, was one of the kindest men. Jim Gordon knew that well, and still smiling he glanced at the clock, which his uncle, being short-sighted, could not see distinctly.

"It's ten to seven!" he announced.

Professor Steel growled, and crossed the hearthrug with one mighty stride; then, bending forward, he peered closely at the clock, and turned furiously to his young nephew again.

"Jim, how often have I told you to be accurate? Scientifically accurate, boy! It's nine and a half minutes to seven, and no more. Get out of my sight, you ass, or—no, stay."

He rubbed his huge hands slowly together, and a smile leaped into his face. If possible it made him look more ferocious than ever. But Jim knew that it was really a smile.

"In nine minutes from now, Jim my boy, we take the Phantom out upon her first deep-sea trip. I hope you saw that all was ready down at the jetty? You are sure you did?"

His voice became a threatening growl once more as he asked the question.

Jim, however, smiled. He was a big, broad-shouldered youngster of eighteen, with a square chin, and a clean-cut, clever face, that lit up when he smiled as though the sunlight had fallen on it. Now he nodded twice.

"All is absolutely O. K.—I mean, correct," he said. "The men are ready, the dynamos are charged, there is gasoline aboard—and, in fact, she's in fighting trim. You may trust me, uncle. I'm as keen on her as you are—and I've been out in her before on her short trips, you know. So I understand what's wanted."

Professor Steel laughed gruffly, and laid his great right hand—almost a paw—upon his nephew's shoulder.

"I believe you. I trust you, Jim. You're a keen boy—a bit of a fool, of course, like most young cubs," he added hastily. "Well, I'll telephone for Peter Gunn. We will drink the health and success of the Phantom together."

He turned and strode furiously to his desk, snatched up a telephone instrument, and spoke into it.

While he was thus occupied, Jim Gordon gazed about him.

He was in Professor Steel's study at the big house on Deepmouth Estuary, on the East Coast.

Through the windows he could see the glistening waters of the Estuary, shimmering in the dying light of the rosy sunset; and beyond was the sea, a misty purple in colour.

It was an interesting district, and Jim, who had worked for three years at engineering with his eccentric uncle, loved it. Now, as he gazed to seaward, he could distinguish a great line of misty, blue hulls; and eagerly he watched these dim shapes, knowing them to be a mighty fleet of Britain's war-dogs—huge battleships steaming up the North Sea on manœuvres, and making for the great naval base at Nasyth.

Presently they were swallowed up in the twilight; and even as they vanished there was a knock at the door, and Peter Gunn, bo'sun of Professor Steel's new and secret submarine cruiser, the Phantom, entered, cap in hand, and scratching his forehead.

A mighty barrel of a man was Peter Gunn—once a petty-officer of the Navy. Fat, broad, and bull-necked, with an iron-grey chin, he stood in the doorway apologetically wagging his head; and the Professor eyed him fiercely.

"Don't stand there like a fool, Gunn! I've called you to drink to the success of the Phantom. We start in six and three-quarter minutes."

So saying the professor seized three tumblers and a jug of water.

Peter Gunn wiped his mouth expressively with a large hand, like a leg of mutton, and winked at Jim.

"Thank you kindly, sir! But, beggin' your pardon, water always gives me a sort o' chill in me innards, it do," he said, scratching his head again.

Professor Steel glared at him, and raised the tumbler as though about to hurl its contents over the sailor. Then he tugged furiously at his beard, growled something about his "drunken crew," and from a bottle poured out a tot of seamen's grog for the bo'sun.

The latter took it, nodded at the ceiling, said "'Ere's lookin'" in a deep bass voice, and swallowed his allowance.

The professor raised his glass of water, snarled out "Success to the voyage," and was about to follow Peter Gunn's example, when a sudden shouting rose from the jetty outside—where the professor had a great workshop, and a private little harbour of his own.

Springing to his feet, with a shout, the professor ran to the window, and was joined by Jim Gordon; and the two of them had an interesting view of what followed.

A sloping grass lawn stretched from the window down to the secret harbour and dockyard that hid the professor's invention, and across this dark figures were running furiously.

The leading figure was that of a small and ragged boy, whose clothes fluttered as he ran; behind him came a man in a bowler-hat and an overcoat, carrying a big camera, such as is used by pressmen; and after him came two sailors, and a lanky black man, whose thick lips and woolly hair marked him down as a negro.

The latter carried a great mop in one hand and a dish in the other, and he shouted furiously as he covered the ground in huge, awkward strides.

"Stop him, thief, sah! Massa! Massa! Hey-hurroo!"

His voice rose to a yell, and as he suddenly tripped and went sprawling over, Jim burst into a roar of laughter.

But his laughter was quelled a second later when suddenly the leading sailor in the procession lifted his hand, which held a pistol. Jim had a vision of the weapon gleaming, and then came a flash of red flame and a sharp crack, followed by a puff of driving smoke.

At the same moment Professor Steel, bellowing with anger, smashed the window pane with his elbow, and leaped clean out on to the ground below.

The next moment he was charging towards the man in the bowler-hat; and, seeing that something was seriously wrong, Jim vaulted out of the window behind him.

He saw the professor ahead make for the man with the camera; and the next moment he had crashed into him with a roar, and the two of them went rolling over and over upon the grass, the professor growling like a dog, and the stranger shouting in terror.

At the same moment Jim, seeing the boy's figure hovering before him, dashed forward, clutched at the lad's collar, and pulled him to the ground. Then he sprang up again, saw the man in the bowler-hat hit Professor Steel and spring up, and he ran forward.

The stranger with the camera dashed to meet him, evidently making a frantic attempt to escape; and like a flash Jim threw himself into boxing attitude, his left arm out, and his head thrown back.

The intruder closed with him, and—smack! Jim's strong left arm flashed out like a piston-rod, and cleanly and surely his fist crashed home beneath the stranger's chin, with eleven stone of brawn and muscle behind it.

That finished the escape, for the unknown flung up his hands, and went over as though he had been shot, and next minute Professor Steel, with a ponderous leap, was kneeling upon his chest, growling over him like a dog with a bone.

CHAPTER II.
Aboard the Phantom.

"Who in thunder are you, sir, you miserable worm? And what do you want here?"

It was four minutes later, and the professor, his beard bristling like barbed-wire, was viewing his white-faced captive by the light of a pocket electric-lamp.

The man flinched before the scientist's glare. Then he rubbed his bruised chin.

"I'm—I'm a photographer!" he said, and pointed to his camera, which lay upon the ground.

Professor Steel snarled.

"A photographer? And you come sneaking round my secret buildings to take snaps for the papers, do you? You come in like a thief?"

The man nodded.

"We've heard about you in the papers," he said. "And a newspaper-seller—a youngster—said you were making trial trips. He said he knew the way to get into your grounds. So he showed me."

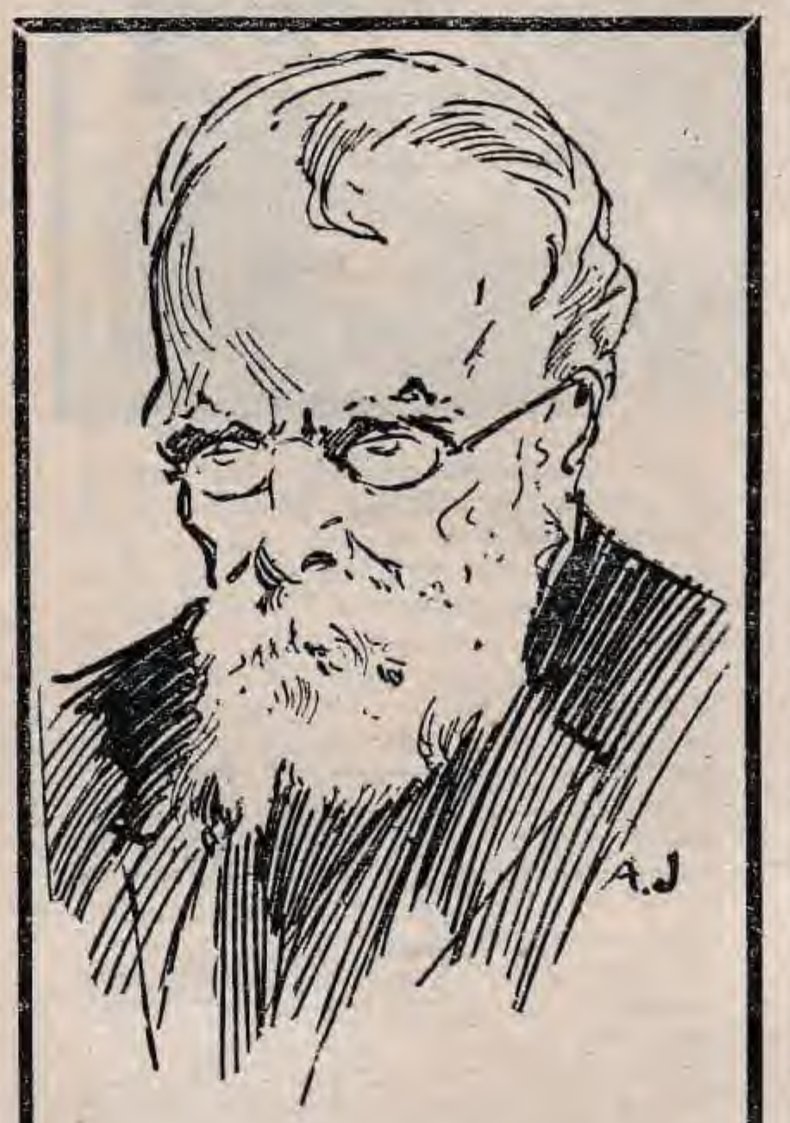
"Scoundrel!" roared Professor Steel. "So you've heard about me in the papers? You heard that I offered my magnificent cruiser of the seas to the poor fools that govern the country—eh? You heard that they refused to see the boat even—refused to pay my price?"

The photographer could not conceal a smile.

"I heard that you'd—er—offended the Government, sir," he said.

As a matter of fact, Professor Steel, on one of his visits to the Admiralty, had deposited a secretary in the waste-paper basket, when the latter had expressed amazement at the price Professor Steel wanted for the secret of his new submarine. Now Professor Steel snarled.

"Scoundrel!" he said, while his men grinned around him. "You heard rightly. The poor idiots refused to take my craft—and you try and sneak in to get photos of her. You're a spy, sir—a base spy! I despise you! But if you want news, by James, you shall have it! Go back to your paper and tell 'em this. Tell 'em that Professor Steel is going to prove that his boat is the finest, most wonderful submarine that ever man dreamed of. Tell 'em, that he is going to show what fools they are—that he scorns the Government. Yes, I'm at war with the rulers for insulting me. They shall regret it. I swear that!"



A man of marvellous genius and iron nerve—Professor Steel, whose thrilling exploits in

THE PHANTOM SUBMARINE

form the most exciting series of complete stories ever got together.

He paused, and his eyes fell upon the man's camera. With a roar he jumped upon it, hurling his ponderous weight at the apparatus until it cracked and broke into splinters. Then he lifted the instrument up, and handed it back to the alarmed pressman.

"Take your photographs!" he roared, and with a mighty swing lifted the man bodily up in his great hands, held him aloft as though he were a child, and crossing the lawn in this fashion, put him over the iron gates at the far side.

"Now—go!" he yelled; and the man, thankful to escape with a whole skin, took to his heels, and Jim, roaring with laughter, heard the dying patter of his feet.

The professor swung round, and then started, as his eyes lit on the small, ragged figure of the boy whom Jim had pulled over—the newspaper-boy who had shown the pressman the way into the grounds.

Steel snorted, and took the lad by the scruff of his neck.

"A boy!" he growled. "A mere lad! Who are you?"

To his surprise the youngster, a thin, jolly-faced boy of about sixteen, never flinched. His face broadened to a smile and he winked at Jim Gordon.

"I'm Joe Davey, sir," he remarked. "I sell papers by the station. Heard all about you, sir, an' saw your boat from the breakwater three evenings ago. That gentleman you've just put out over the gate paid me a dollar to show him how to get in here—along the rocks at low tide. Didn't know there was any harm, as it was only a bit of sport."

The professor groaned.

"After all the precautions I've taken against spies! Gr-r-r!" He paused, and pulled a watch from his pocket. "It's seven—past seven—and we're late already. Get aboard, men! Tom Sunlight"—this to the tall negro with the mop—"get us some supper ready for nine o'clock."

Then the professor glanced at Tom Davey again, and frowned.

"What am I to do with you? You've seen too much, you young imp!" He smiled in his beard, for Davey's expression was one of comical surprise.

There was a pause, and then Jim Gordon, who had taken a sudden liking to the boy, strode forward.

"Look here, sir," he said, "why not take the kid aboard with us? We mustn't let him go, as he knows so much—and I believe he's straight enough. He could be useful on board in the cabin. And I'll bet he'd rather do that than sell papers. We can talk to him afterwards."

"You bet I'll come!" remarked Davey. "I ain't so fond of me parents at home. Get knocked about too much. You take me, sir; and I'll not breathe a word about the marvellous submarine! That's a bargain!"

For a moment the professor glared at him. Then suddenly he laughed at the impudence of the boy, and turned to Jim Gordon.

"All right, Jim!" he said. "It's got to be. I give him into your charge—only if any word leaks out from the young wretch in future I'll—I'll flay him alive!"

"I think he's safe enough," was Jim's answer, as he took Davey's arm. "Come, Tom—that's your name, eh?—it's time you came aboard as a passenger."

So saying he set off in rear of the professor, who was hurrying towards the workshop with mighty strides after his men. A moment later they were passing through the great doors of the shed, and as a blaze of light sprang from the arc-lamps, Tom Davey, his eyes like saucers, uttered a yell of amazement.

Before him, beneath the lights, lay a huge tank, like a mighty swimming-bath, and in this sea dock, at the seaward end of which were vast doors, floated the strange submarine craft.

She was painted whitish grey; her hull was cigar-shaped, and glistening. But at her bow was no pointed ram, or blunt nose, such as is usually seen in submarines. In their place were two

mighty steel claws, like the beak of a parrot, of terrific size and strength, and fitted with huge steel teeth.

Before Tom Davey could find words to express his astonishment, he was hurried forward along a gangway that led to the conning-tower, and found himself descending a steel ladder, leading past a huge switchboard, full of painted levers and wheels and handles.

Once below decks he had a vision of a machinery-crammed tunnel, with dynamos and gleaming engines stretching from bow to stern, among which moved blue-clad engineers, beneath the electric-lights.

Then Jim Gordon led him through an atmosphere that was filled with the smell of oil and hot steel, down a rubber-carpeted gangway to the bow; and even as they tramped forward an electric-gong clanged shrilly somewhere overhead, and the professor's voice roared out an order.

Instantly the engineers sprang to their levers, the hull of the submarine quivered as a droning and throbbing sound became audible.

A moment later, as the hiss of air being forced from the tanks rang through the craft, the lighted dock slid back, and Jim Gordon nodded.

"We're off, Tom," he cried—"off for a ten-hours' cruise at full speed! Let's hope for a decent voyage!"

And as Jim spoke he little thought what a terrible voyage it was to be.

CHAPTER III.
A Grand Victory.

Jim Gordon and Tom were now in the very bows of the boat, in a kind of look-out porthole, that was situated exactly above the mighty steel beak which Tom had noted.

On either side of them were the two torpedo tubes; and in front of Jim was a telephone leading to the conning-tower, and a number of switches.

"This is my station on the submarine," said Gordon. "Watch!"

So saying, he pressed a switch. There was a buzzing, and from somewhere above a dazzling shaft of greenish light leaped out, and illumined the dark water before them.

"We're underneath now," explained Gordon. "You needn't be afraid, though, sonny!"

"Afraid! Not me!" remarked Davey, seating himself upon a locker, and gazing back at the glittering tunnel of machinery, and the toiling forms of the engineers. "This is first-rate! How fast do we go? We're moving now," he added.

Far below, in the light of the green ray, the sand was slipping back with astonishing speed. Peering down, Jim could see white masses of pebbles and black shapes of rock sweeping under them. Now and again a number of silvery fish appeared, gliding past like ghosts, frightened by the swirl of the twin propellers, only to be left behind with a rush.

Jim nodded.

"We make thirty knots below water—an easy record for submarines. On the surface we make forty-five; and skimming with the air fins out we do seventy in calm weather!"

"Gee whiz!" was Davey's remark.

Then he leaned forward on his locker, gazing through the circle of the porthole to the dimly-seen sand below, and after a while the sharp clang of a bell aroused him.

Jim nodded as the submarine heeled over to port.

"We're turning," he said. "Now we're heading up the North Sea for our full-power test."

The roar of the engines became louder. The whole boat shook and trembled, and Tom, peering out, saw that the bottom was no longer visible. They were in deep water.

With a grunt he curled himself on the locker, and laid his head on his arm. And after a while he fell asleep, for he was tired; and Jim, watching him as he stood by the switchboard, ready for orders, smiled. For Davey looked just like a little fox-terrier picked out of the gutter!

* * * * *

"By thunder! What on earth's that ahead?"

Davey, startled by Jim's wild exclamation, which was shouted out in an alarmed voice, sprang to his feet.

Next moment Jim pulled him forward to the watch port, pointing ahead along the green ray of the searchlight.

Professor Steel saw several dark figures crossing his private grounds, and without a moment's hesitation he smashed the window of his study and leapt on to the lawn below.

"Look, boy!" he said. "What do you make of that?"

Tom stared.

In the path of light ahead a shoal of ghostly, huge shapes appeared, like a school of whales—great shadows they were, slipping along in silence—a dozen of them in mid-water, with silvery fish flashing about them like snowflakes in the light. But they were not whales.

They had no flukes, and astern of each a stream of silvery bubbles marked the swirl of twin-screws.

Suddenly Tom, as sharp as a needle, realised that they were submarines, and he cried out that some of them bore torpedo tubes.

"Ahead, there!" came Professor Steel's voice, from a trumpet-like mouthpiece attached to the telephone. "Great thunder! Are you asleep there, boy? Don't you see those boats ahead?" it roared.

Jim sprang to the mouthpiece.

"Yes," he bellowed; "just spotted 'em! We're overhauling 'em fast! They're submarines! What do you make of 'em?"

"Make of 'em! You ass! They're foreigners! No British submarines ever had that build! Good heavens! Switch off that searchlight! There's something wrong! We're near the naval base at Nasyth, and the Home Fleet should be ahead somewhere—twenty-five battleships! Quick, Jim!"

Even as the voice spoke, two of the rear shapes ahead suddenly swung out of line and circled slowly round, heading towards the Phantom.

They had seen the ray of the professor's wonderful submarine searchlight, and with a quick motion Jim pulled over a switch; there was a buzzing, and the ray vanished.

At the same moment the Phantom echoed with the jangle of signal bells, and the bow tilted upwards, as the craft beat up for the surface of the sea.

Gazing astern, young Tom Davey, with his heart beating wildly, saw that the crew were running to their posts, and that the whole scene was one of sudden orderly haste.

For a few moments he clung like a kitten to his place, for the Phantom was driving steeply upward; and then he shouted as the craft suddenly broke water, with a mighty swirl of spray and foam round the beak claws at the bow, and through the port he had a vision of a tumbling, black sea, and not more than four miles away a cluster of lights, and sweeping searchlights swinging across the sea.

Professor Steel came charging with mighty strides along the gangway, and seizing Jim, flung him aside as he went to the port. For a second he gazed ahead. Then he turned, his eyes blazing and his black beard bristling fiercely.

"It's a plot—an act of war!" he bellowed. "Don't gape at me, nephew! Those boats are foreign! They're inside the three-mile limit, and ahead is our Fleet! It's a surprise attack! It's an act of war! Thunder! And the Fleet are defenceless!"

For a moment he stood, tugging at his beard, while the Phantom drove

along, with sheets of spray rattling over her armoured hull.

Then his face cleared, and he exploded with laughter, shaking his fist.

"It's good luck at last, Jim!" he shouted. "Now we'll show the fools in the Government what we can do! Men, fall in to fighting stations! Torpedo-men, forward! Peter Gunn, you lubber, stand by the bow tubes here! Jim, clear the beak for action! What am I going to do?" he added, as Jim questioned him. "Why, you young dolt, I'm going to fight the lot of 'em! I'm going to fight the whole fleet! To your posts! It's life or death!"

With a bound he was racing back to the conning-tower, bellowing his commands; and Jim clutched a lever at his side—a lever painted scarlet.

He tugged it over, and somewhere in the darkness of the machine-tunnels below a dynamo spluttered, and piston-rods moved.

The Phantom dived again, at a tremendous angle, and went swooping below, surrounded by a hissing cloud of bubbles, and the great steel beak ahead opened wide, like the jaws of some mighty animal.

"Lumme! This is all right, this is!"

Peter Gunn shouted out as he tugged at the levers of the bow torpedo tubes. Simultaneously a steel locker in the floor opened, and a small crimson, cigar-shaped torpedo appeared, trundled forward on a moving band, and was locked into position in the tube.

"The professor's patent torpedo!" cried Jim to Davey.

From the trumpet mouthpiece came the professor's growling order for the searchlight, and a second later the green ray was piercing the darkness like a sword-blade; and as the Phantom circled round, the leading submarines of the attacking flotilla appeared.

They were forging towards the professor's boat.

Then Jim cried out as a dark object leaped from the bows of the leading boat, and rushed by in a swirl of bubbles. It was a torpedo! And now no proof was needed of the hostility of the mysterious flotilla.

A bell clanged out. Next moment, quivering all over, the Phantom was in action—one boat fighting a whole flotilla!

Driving at her full speed of thirty knots, she tore at the foremost submarine. It loomed suddenly before the port, glistening and huge. A gong clanged, and Peter Gunn tugged his lever.

As he did so, Tom saw one of the tiny torpedoes leap from the tube, and strike the stern of the foreign boat.

There was a flash, and the side of the craft cracked, as the Phantom rolled and swung hard a-port, just grazing her enemy.

"There's enough explosive in those torpedoes to break the side of a submarine!" shouted Jim, peering wildly ahead as the craft reeled. "And, by James, it's sufficient!"

He spoke truly. The foreign boat reeled and dropped below, vanishing in the darkness of deep water. There was no time for rejoicing, however. Ahead another dark shape loomed, and Peter Gunn let her have it right amidships.

In the glare of the searchlight Tom saw the whole side of the craft gape and crack like an eggshell, while a vast swirl of bubbles showed how the air was pouring out.

"Crumbs! Won't the papers sell after this?" he yelled.

Swoop!

The Phantom pitched wildly, and her dynamos roared as she shot upwards; and Jim saw that they had been nearly torpedoed by a boat astern. There was a wild moment of staggering as the submarine lurched. Then Jim yelled in excitement, and clutched at Tom's arm, drawing him forward.

"Glory! We have her, Tom! Look, boy! The professor's great invention at work!"

He pointed through a porthole at the side of the craft, and Tom understood what certain strange steel tentacle ropes on the upper-deck of the submarine were for.

Worked by electric magnets, they were writhing and stretching out like the living arms of an octopus; and even as Tom stared they gripped the bow of the hostile submarine just ahead—a submarine that was closing on the Phantom.

Like living snakes, those steel ropes gripped her bows, and tugged her down. She appeared just ahead, pushed along by the nose of the Phantom, and gripped in such a way that she could not turn to use her torpedo tubes. Tom saw her glistening hull, and staggered as the Phantom dived like a stone, bearing her prey below.

"Now break her, Jim!"

The roaring order boomed from the megaphone trumpet, and like a flash Jim bent forward, twisting a brass wheel.

Instantly those crushing beak-claws at the bow closed upon the nose of the foreign boat. A motor engine throbbed wildly, and the beak crushed its great steel teeth into the plates before it, while a pointed steel bolt, like a huge cold chisel, flashed out from the centre of it, stabbing a great hole in the thin armour of the enemy's craft.

A rush of bubbles swirled before the porthole; and as Jim yelled at the telephone that the order was carried out, at the same moment releasing the steel beak, the Phantom went hard astern, and the steel tentacles writhed free from the craft ahead.

Then the Phantom lurched and swung round, and the roar of her engines showed that she was going full speed ahead after an enemy. For a while she tore on, with the sea roaring about her; then came a crash, and the whole craft reeled and tilted over wildly.

"Two boats ahead—torpedoes!" roared the professor's voice.

And Peter Gunn, yelling cheerily peered through the port, and despatched two deadly messengers through the water. But one missed, and the other struck only a glancing blow. Simultaneously the craft that had been missed turned and plunged, in full flight, while the submarine that had been merely touched tilted upward.

Tom saw her driving for the surface, and heard the clang of signal bells, as the Phantom was tilted upwards to follow her.

Then came disaster.

Even as Professor Steel's cruiser was gaining on her opponent, another craft loomed out of the darkness—a craft that had been unseen.

Plainly those in her were desperate, for she came straight at the Phantom, and suddenly Jim saw her glistening hull appear in the ray of the searchlight.

"Full speed! Look out, men!"

The professor shouted wildly. But he was too late. With a mighty crash and a rending of steel, the hostile craft struck the Phantom, smashing her own bows in, and tearing a great rent in the British vessel. The Phantom rolled wildly as the foreigner dropped away, her duty done, to meet her end in the deep waters; and Tom screamed. For suddenly there was a fierce whistling of escaping air, and he saw, astern, a great spout of shining water foaming in through a gap.

His heart thumped wildly against his ribs; he had a vision of the enemy's craft ahead, and of the water swirling past.

He heard Jim cry out that another minute would finish everything. And then, as the Phantom lurched and jibbed, racing desperately for the surface, he slipped. His head crashed against a steel bolt, and darkness fell upon him.

. . . . .

He was aroused by the splash of cold water on his face, and for a moment believed that he was drowning. Then he smiled, finding that Jim was swabbing his forehead, and feeling the craft swaying below his feet, and hearing the roar of spray upon the plates overhead. He realised that the Phantom had reached the surface in the nick of time.

"We're all right, then?" he asked.

And Jim Gordon nodded.

"Just in time! We reached the surface, and sunk the enemy's last submarine with the pneumatic gun. The rest of the flotilla have turned tail, I think. Now we've got the big airplanes out on each side, and we're skimming the water at sixty knots! There, look!"

He pointed, and Tom saw that they were in the midst of the dark line of British battleships, which they had saved from destruction.

A booming voice behind him caused him to turn, and he saw Professor Steel tugging at his beard.

"Signal the battleships, and tell 'em what's happened! They'd better look out, in case we haven't settled the attack all together. But I think we have!"

The professor was right. There were no further signs of the enemy's submarines.

And thus Professor Steel proved to the Government that his cruiser was the finest submarine that had ever been built; for it had saved the British Fleet, and it had prevented a war.

The enemy across the sea, their surprise attack having failed, were forced to climb down and apologise, for they were not strong enough to meet Britain above seas.

But when a member of the Government came to Professor Steel's house, a few days later, to open negotiations with regard to the purchase of the Phantom, the professor roared, and put him outside the gate.

"No," he said. "You refused once. Henceforth I and my crew work the craft ourselves, and between us we'll rule the seas! That's my warning!"

And Jim Gordon and Tom Davey laughed as the member of the Government picked himself up and ran away, frightened by Professor Steel's voice and his ferocious face.

(Another enthralling tale of "The Phantom Submarine" next week.)

The Forest of Fear.

Our Great New Story of Thrilling Adventure in Wild Africa.

By Reginald Wray.

TO FIND THE GOLDEN LILY!

TERENCE O'ROURKE, a young Irish doctor, has set out in a small yacht on a journey to Africa, his fixed purpose being to discover the Forest of Fear, where it is believed a marvellous plant can be found that has wonderful healing properties. This flower is called the Golden Lily.

O'Rourke's little boat is wrecked by a storm in mid-ocean, and he is saved from death by CAPTAIN NIOLA, who turns up in his marvellous airship, the Roc.

On board this airship are three young Britishers, JIM HUSTLER, JACK ORDE, and JOE VANCE, whilst another central character in the story is DAK, the captain's black servant.

After hearing O'Rourke's tale of his intended quest, Captain Niola at once starts the airship in quest of the Forest of Fear.

The forest is reached at last, and during a desperate encounter with the natives, O'Rourke falls into their hands, and is carried off.

Escaping from the savages, O'Rourke is befriended by a beautiful white woman, who is known as Saloni, or "She Who Rules."

Jack, Joe, and Jim set out from the airship to find O'Rourke, and fall in with him at a moment when he and the White Queen are being threatened by the savages.

The witch-doctor, Hanto, sends word that Saloni must forsake the Britishers' protection and marry him.

(Now read on.)

The White Queen's Dread.

"What's the spalpeen saying?" demanded Terence O'Rourke, noting the deep flush which had suddenly overspread the girl's beautiful white face.

"Wait, my friend, I will tell you all by and by."

Turning to the masked dancers, she drew herself up to her full height, saying:

"Listen, Voice of Hanto! Return to him who sent you and say: Thus says She Who Rules. The white men are of my own race, and one will shortly be my husband. I, your queen—She Who Rules by the power of the golden lily—has spoken!"

"Beware, Saloni!" cried the masked figure, in deep, threatening tones. "Hanto, who made, can unmake. It is also the law of the Twagas that he who touches the White Queen shall die. Does Saloni think the Voice of Hanto is blind, that he cannot see that the white man's hand is holding your own?"

Terence O'Rourke did not understand a word the Twaga was saying, yet the quick glance Saloni cast upon him and the tender flush that mounted her cheek told that the messenger was referring to him.

Some instinct had told him the trend of the conversation, and, determined that there should be no misunderstanding as to his relations with their queen, O'Rourke wound his arm round her slim waist, and, drawing her towards him, pressed his lips on her partly averted cheek.

The effect was immediate.

With a low moan of despair, Saloni thrust the young doctor from her side; with terrified shrieks the flower-maidens shrank from them; and the Amazon guard, uttering low cries of horror, raised their spears as though about to plunge them into the daring young Irishman's heart, whilst the Twagas, rising to their feet, stood for a moment motionless; then brown arms, grasping swords, sprang through the thatch of their masks, and, with wild, vindictive yells of ungovernable rage, they hurled themselves upon the little party.

"Quick, lads—fire!" shouted Jack Orde at the top of his voice.

As he spoke he emptied his own rifle at the nearest Twaga, who, pitching forward, rolled heavily on the ground.

For the next few seconds the chums were firing rapidly, until, unable to face the stream of lead, the charge of the Twagas was stopped; and next moment, throwing aside the masks, Hanto's messengers were fleeing as swiftly as they could lay their legs to the ground.

Whilst this was taking place, Terence O'Rourke's and, perchance, Saloni's life also hung in the balance.

The Amazon guard had raised their spears to slay the daring white man who had had the presumption to embrace their queen.

Terence, whose only thought was for the beautiful girl who had won his heart, had stepped before her, and, with raised revolver, was boldly facing the threatening Amazons when the rifles and revolvers of his companions rang out.

As the Amazon guard heard the thunderous reports of the white men's weapons and saw spears of flame dart dully through the daylight, to be followed in almost every instance by the fall of a Twaga, they stood for a moment gazing in dismay and horror at the white magicians, as they evidently deemed them. Then, as Terence raised one of the death-dealing tubes, they turned to fly.

Already Saloni's attendants had disappeared amidst the flower-capped hedges.

So quickly had events moved that within a minute of Terence O'Rourke's unfortunate action Saloni and her leopards were alone with the four Britishers.

"Be jabers, it's trouble I'm thinking is ahead! What will the niggers do when they know that we are about to marry?"

Saloni made no immediate reply. Her face was deathly white, and she trembled so that, except for Terence's supporting arm, she would have fallen to the ground.

"Oh, Terence—Terence, what have you done?" she sobbed at last.

"Done, Saloni? Simply taught the niggers a lesson that they won't forget."

"You are right, Terry," replied Saloni, a faint smile flitting across her pale lips. "They will never forget it—never, never! Nor will they forgive," she added solemnly.

O'Rourke looked searchingly at his beautiful companion.

"You think they will venture to attack us here?"

Saloni nodded.

"They will do so as certainly as day follows night," she replied confidently. Listen! Already the war-drums are beating! Soon the Twagas will be upon us by hundreds!"

As she spoke she held up her hand, and the little party stood for some minutes listening apprehensively to a deep, hollow, booming sound that seemed to fill the forest in every direction.

Terence O'Rourke turned an anguish-stricken face to the beautiful Queen of the Twagas.

"What have I done?" he groaned. "But surely they will not dare to lay their hands on you? Leave us to our fate, and save yourself!"

She Who Rules drew herself up proudly.

"No. The Twagas have always told me that I belonged to a superior race, and since I have seen my white brothers I know that such is indeed the case. And do you think I will disgrace the land of my forefathers?"

As she spoke she removed the golden lily from her head, and, snapping the stem in two, hurled it at her feet.

"Now am I one of you, and we will live or die together!"

"Who talks of dying?" cried Jack Orde, seeing the young doctor too agitated to speak. "We've got rifles and revolvers and plenty of ammunition. If only there's sufficient food in the house, we can defend it for days against any number of Twagas."

He spoke hopefully, yet he knew, and his comrades knew also, that whatever else the Twagas might be, they were brave to a fault, and once the stock of ammunition was expended they would be at the mercy of their merciless foes.

However, it is not a British method to meet trouble half-way; and, rapidly retiring to the pavilion, Jack Orde

took command, and they were soon busy barricading the doors and unglazed windows, whilst Saloni moved swiftly backwards and forwards carrying pitchers of water and delicately-woven baskets full of fruit and food.

So well did they work that within an hour of their entering the pavilion Jack Orde looked around him with a well-satisfied smile as he declared that they could hold the house against any number of foes.

Saloni's Defiance.

So engrossed had the four Britishers been in their work of putting the pavilion in a state of defence that it was not until the door and the three windows which pierced the walls on each side of the single room were completed that they noticed the ominous stillness that obtained on every hand

Now not a voice was heard save their own. Even the war drums of the Twagas had ceased to beat, and, as the hours dragged slowly by, the little garrison began almost to long for the fighting to commence.

Even the fearful war-cry of their foes would be better than the silence that obtained on every hand.

The queen's pavilion was built of wood, and had a flat roof, reached by a ladder protruding through an opening at one end.

On this roof Jack took his stand, expecting every moment to hear the Twaga war-cry and see the hideous savages charging over the little paradise of flowers that surrounded them on every side.

But hour succeeded hour, and yet no attack was made.

Presently a movement in the direction of the gates through which they had entered attracted his attention.

"Below there! Stand to your arms!" he ordered, hastening to the opening.

With rifle advanced, Jack Orde returned to the parapet and fixed his eyes upon where a number of dark forms could be seen moving slowly through the trees.

He knew that the taboo had been removed from the garden, and that the Twagas were advancing upon them in force.

So skilfully did they take cover that only an occasional glimpse of a brown body and a gentle movement amongst the branches told of their presence.

Presently this ceased entirely, and a minute later the witch doctor sprang from out a flowering shrub. Holding aloft both his hands, he approached the pavilion in a series of grotesque jumps.

Evidently he came as a herald, and it was not until he was within a dozen yards of the pavilion that Jack raised his head and shoulders above the parapet, and, pointing his rifle at the weirdly-bedecked figure, ordered him to halt.

Hanto obeyed the summons with ludicrous haste; indeed, to judge from the glances he cast to right and left, it was evident that he was torn between unwillingness to show himself in an unfavourable light to his comrades and a deadly fear of the white man's magic.

The former apparently prevailed, and, waving his hands above his head, he shouted:

"Saloni! Saloni! Saloni!" at the top of his voice.

Jack Orde hesitated.

Without Saloni's aid it was impossible to learn what Hanto had to communicate; on the other hand, he feared some act of treachery. A hurled spear or carefully thrown knife might strike the beautiful girl down ere he could prevent it.

His doubts were settled by Saloni herself, who, approaching noiselessly, laid her hand on his shoulder, and, leaning towards Hanto, cried:

"What does Hanto want with She Who Rules?"

The witch doctor bowed almost to the ground.

"I come, Saloni, to beg you to return to your subjects, to abandon your white friend who has broken our laws and has dared to slay the priests of our god."

"And I—have I not also broken your laws?" demanded Saloni proudly.

"Ay, queen. But you sinned in ignorance—or, what is more likely, have fallen under the spell of the white magicians—and if you will return to your people and marry me, the past shall be forgotten and you and I together will rule the Forest of Fear."

"And if I refuse?" asked the girl.

A spasm of ungovernable rage swept across the witch doctor's hideous face.

"Then the fate of the white men shall be yours!" he thundered. "Already, as high priest of the Twagas' god, I have removed the taboo. Until I choose, you are no more than any other woman—nay, even less. It is only my order that keeps the spears and knives of the Twaga warriors from piercing your heart."

"And if I consent to remain, if I continue to rule the Twagas as I have done in the past, will you let the white men go free?" demanded Saloni.

"Never!" almost shrieked Hanto. "I have sworn that they shall pass through the ten degrees of heat at the feet of the god!"

Saloni shuddered.

She had always refused to attend the Twagas' rites, but she knew that Hanto had condemned her white companions to ten ordeals by fire, each more fiendish and cruel than the preceding one. Terrible would be their agonies ere death gave them relief from their sufferings.

White as death, yet perfectly calm and self-possessed, Saloni raised her arm and pointed towards the distant gates.

"Go, Hanto!" she ordered. "Return to the Twagas, tell them that she who was their ruler has learnt that she was born a British subject, and is prouder of that title than of the one they, unasked, conferred upon her. Do your worst! In the name of my four friends, I defy you! Go!"

Never had the wily witch doctor seen Saloni look so beautiful or so queenly as she did at that moment. A flood of entreaties, threats, and orders poured from his lips, but Saloni turned her back upon him and walked slowly away.

A shriek burst from the witch doctor's lips, as, snatching a throwing-knife from his belt, he whirled it around his head.

But even as he did so, Terence O'Rourke, who, standing at the loop-holed door beneath, had had him covered all the time, took a swift aim with his rifle, and next moment the knife flew from the witch doctor's hand, and, clasping his shattered wrist, he dashed back to his hidden comrades.

A Message from Niola.

Barely had Hanto reached his companions ere a wild, fierce chorus of yells burst from the Twagas. Springing from the dense mass of vegetation beneath which they had crouched, they charged towards the pavilion.

The defenders' rifles spoke out.

It was almost impossible to miss so plain a mark, and Twaga after Twaga rolled dead or seriously injured on the ground.

Yet, great though their loss, it seemed as though nothing could check that wild charge.

Jack Orde realised that, unless a miracle happened, the Twagas would carry the pavilion at the first assault.

And the miracle did happen; for even as he paused to reload his rifle, he saw a round, glistening object fall from the impenetrable mass of boughs and branches immediately above their heads.

A moment later it had struck the ground, and, exploding in a ball of fire, tore a huge gap in the attackers' ranks.

So tremendous was the effect of the bomb, so sudden and unexpected the explosion, that the Twagas' fierce yells were hushed. Then, as the little garrison opened fire upon them with increased energy, they uttered low, moaning cries of terror, and fled.

Jack Orde was almost as stunned by the result of the falling bomb as their foes.

For nearly a minute he remained gazing in speechless amazement and almost overpowering delight at the impenetrable ceiling of boughs and leaves above their heads.

Making a trumpet of his hands, he shouted with all the force of his lungs:

"Help, Captain Niola—help!"

Breathlessly he awaited an answering hail; but none came, save that just as the little garrison who had joined their commander on the roof, and were shouting themselves hoarse, were on the point of giving up in despair, a second bomb followed the first.

Striking the ground close to the trampled and torn flower-bed on which its predecessor had fallen, it exploded with a faint report. As the smoke cleared away, Orde saw a tiny cylinder lying amongst the dead and wounded Twagas.

Clambering over the parapet, he dropped lightly to the ground and ran swiftly towards the cylinder.

It was but a short distance, yet twice he had to dart aside to avoid the vicious grasp of a wounded Twaga at his ankle. Once it was only by hurling himself swiftly to the ground that he escaped being pierced by the blade of a skilfully thrown knife.

But at last he reached his goal, and, thrusting the cylinder into his pocket, commenced the return journey.

As he did so a wild chorus of yells burst out behind him.

Glancing over his shoulder, he saw three Twagas, their hideous faces contorted with rage, rushing at him from behind a flowering shrub.

Snatching his revolver from its sheath, he took a hasty aim.

He dared not stop to see the result of his shot, but a cry of pain, followed by a hoarse shout of rage, told that his bullet had not been wasted.

The next moment a cold chill of terror swept through his veins, as an iron-like grip encircled his ankle and he was hurled heavily to the ground.

His fall was greeted by a triumphant yell from his pursuers, who dashed towards him with redoubled speed.

Jack Orde gave himself up for lost;

yet, determined to fight to the last, he caught up the revolver, which had fallen from his hand, and brought it down with terrific force upon the head of the savage who still grasped his ankle.

Next moment he felt the stricken man's fingers relax their hold; but as he strove to regain his feet, he saw, to his horror, that the Twagas were already upon him.

Struggling to one knee, he thrust his revolver forward and pulled the trigger.

An ejaculation of dismay escaped his lips as an ominous click told that his last cartridge had been fired.

Dismayed, he watched the nearest Twaga raise his fearful sword above his head.

But ere the blow could fall, three long, sinuous forms darted past him, and the next moment, with fangs buried deep in his throat, Jack Orde's would-be slayer was hurled backwards to the ground with one of Saloni's leopards on the top of him.

Fearless though they were, the queen's tame leopards had ever been a source of superstitious terror to the Twagas, and they flew for their lives before the avenging animals.

Scarce able to believe that he was still alive, Jack Orde staggered to his feet, and a few minutes later was scrambling through a window, the barricade of which had been partially removed to allow of his passage.

Jack had had a narrow escape from death, yet he did not for a moment grudge it, for on opening the blackened cylinder he found a letter from Captain Niola.

It was addressed to "Jack Orde, or whoever picks this up," and ran:

"The reports of your rifles tell me that you are in peril. I have searched in vain for an opening through the trees of the Forest of Fear. As I cannot come to you, you must come to me. NIOLA."

"Shure, and I wish we could go to him! But it's two-legged animals, and not birds, that we are," declared O'Rourke ruefully.

"He means that we must climb the trees; and as the Twagas are evidently only waiting for nightfall to overwhelm us, I suggest that we take to the trees as quickly as we can," proposed Jack.

And as this seemed their only chance, preparations for leaving the pavilion were at once commenced.

(Another thrilling instalment next Tuesday.)

A lithe form darted through the air, and the savage went down with the leopard's fangs buried in his throat.

ALL ABOUT THE ENGLISH CUP.

A Topical "Footer" Article.

By "Centre-Forward."

(Continued from last week.)

As I told my friends last week, in the year 1910 Barnsley met Newcastle United in the English Cup, and after a hard game they were just beaten.

The following season their luck seemed to change. They fared so badly that they were knocked out of the cup competition in the second round, and finished bottom but one in the Second Division of the English League.

Last season, as every football lover knows, they won the Cup, and, of course, received another huge sum of money. This, naturally, was of great use to them after the previous bad season. What a change in the fortunes of a club!

As may be seen, the F. A. Cup is often the means of putting a struggling club "on its legs." If a club succeeds in reaching the third or fourth round of the competition, they may be sure of netting a thousand pounds or so out of it.

Last year Reading joined the First Division of the Southern League from the Second Division, with very little money behind them. They reached the second round of the Cup, met Aston Villa, drew with them, and won in the replay. In the third round they were paired with Manchester United. They drew the first match at home, but were beaten, but not disgraced, in the match at Manchester. These four matches meant a lot to Reading. They were able to pay off all their debts, and bank a good sum of money.

Perhaps the proudest footballers in the country are those who possess an English Cup medal. Lord Kinnaird and C. H. Wollaston, who used to play for the Wanderers, and James Forrest, the old Blackburn Rover, each hold five medals. How they must prize these!

The Final match, as no doubt every footballer is aware, is played at the Crystal Palace. On the great day the sight of the crowds in or near the football ground is one never to be forgotten. From early morning trains pour into the various London termini, bringing people from all parts of the country. The roads to Sydenham are one mass of people, and the tram-cars and 'buses are crowded. In fact, everybody is football mad!

It has often been said that the teams taking part in the Final match do not give of their best. Can it be wondered at when there are nearly a hundred thousand people looking on and cheering to their utmost? In the Tottenham Hotspurs v. Sheffield United match 110,802 people paid for admission. How would any reader of CHEER BOYS CHEER like to play before such a crowd?

The Scourge of the School.

Conclusion of Andrew Gray's Great School Serial.

The Last of the Scourge.

Mr. Adair had had a suspicion that something was wrong, hence his surprise visit to-day. Bob's letters home had been few of late, and what did arrive were jerky, and quite unlike his usual happy-go-lucky style.

Then had come a mysterious letter from Sandell & James, the solicitors, asking questions about Bob that one could not make head or tail of. That had led to an interview which was more unsatisfactory still to Mr. Adair.

Consequently he and Bob's favourite sister, Molly, had made this journey down to-day to see the boy for themselves. And now they simply could not believe their ears.

Bob—their Bob—charged with theft, and forgery, and everything else that was despicable!

"But that's wrong. I tell you!" persisted Fennell fiercely. "I don't know what Bob's cousin Brian has quite got to do with it, because he's been run over, poor chap, and is insensible. But, at any rate, he has told Dr. Mardon that Bob here is innocent of everything. That I do know!"

"Then the quickest thing for us to to is to find Dr. Mardon," said Mr. Adair. "Where did you see him last? We'll go to him at once!"

But fortunately at that instant a new-comer hurried in. It was Dr. Mardon himself.

"Good gracious, Mr. Adair," he ejaculated in consternation, "I never dreamt to find you here, amid all this ghastly business. Nevertheless, it is for the best, perhaps," he went on, "for, having seen your son charged like a felon, you shall hear me now declare, on the confession of one who lies on his death-bed, perhaps, that your boy is as innocent as the day!"

The only sound was Molly's little cry of relief, as she again flung herself into her brother's arms.

"You have heard this good news before, then?" questioned the Head.

"Yes, these young gentlemen here have already told us," replied Mr. Adair. "And, needless to say, I knew it could only be a mistake!"

"Oh, you did, did you?" sneered the detective truculently. "Well, if this lad is innocent, as you pretend he is," he blustered, turning to the Head, "who is the guilty party? Come—out with it!"

Dr. Mardon looked at him, his eyes fixed, his cheeks grey and drawn with agony. Then at last, with a mighty effort, he seemed to force the words from his lips.

"My own son, Bruce!" he said.

His chin fell upon his breast; he covered his face with his hands, and his shoulders shook with suppressed sobs of grief and shame. A deathly silence filled the charge-room.

"Oh, indeed!" sneered the detective, breaking it at last. He almost seemed to smack his lips with glee at the confession. "So it was your own son, Bruce, was it, who was guilty of all these crimes you charged against this innocent lad?"

"And my son, too!" struck in a voice bravely, and the group parted, to admit Brian's father also to the scene.

"Terence!" cried Bob's father.

"Mike! My stars, is that you?" was the gasping answer. And the two brothers, who had been the bitterest foes these twenty years, came face to face again at last.

There is no need to go too deeply into that affecting scene. In two words, Mr. Terence Adair let fall the secret that it was he who had been Bob's unknown benefactor all the time.

"I meant so well," he told Bob's pater brokenly. "More and more, as the years rolled on, the thought that you and I were still estranged cut me to the heart. I tried to approach you, Mike, but you were proud."

"I know, Terence, old boy—I know!" answered Bob's dad, in a voice as broken as his.

"And now all that I have done is to get your boy accused of crimes he has never committed, and to drag you down to this!"

"To what? To this, you mean!" said Bob's pater, nobly gripping his hand. "You have brought us two together again, at any rate. And it will be worth it. We can unravel this hideous tangle, perhaps. It can't be true about your Brian.

"Ah, yes! It is, unfortunately, only too true. He has just confessed it all to me himself. He was tempted, I know——"

"Yes, and by my son!" struck in the Head. "My own son Bruce, the Scourge of the School!"

Fennell & Co., clustering in the corner, choked to hear him. Proud man, and straight as a dart, they knew that this must be the bitterest agony of his life. Therefore they tip-toed quietly out

One grain of comfort they had gathered, though. Brian Adair was still alive, and even strong enough to talk. Perhaps he might pull through, after all. Their hearts went out to him in his extremity.

Not that they had ever cared for him. He was a waster, as even his cronies confessed. But as his dad had said, he had been tempted.

Bruce Mardon was the arch-villain who had made him his tool, compelling him to work all the evil he could in the school.

Secret drinking, smoking, gaming at cards, billiards and betting—why, it even came out that the bookie Lomas, whom he was always terrifying them with, was only a dummy, after all.

Bruce had been quietly pocketing all their money himself, and putting them on to "stiff 'uns" besides, in the guise of being their pal.

What had become of Bruce, no one could say. But like the cur he was, even the sight of his dupe being dragged along under the motor's wheels never made him forget his own miserable skin.

He must have taken to his heels there and then, skulking along by night most likely, until he gained some seaport, whence he worked his passage to the States.

For it was in America that his heart-broken pater next heard of him some years afterwards.

Thanks to the generosity of the governors of the school, there never was a breath that Dr. Mardon should resign his post at St. Bartlemy's.

So Dr. Mardon remained to hold up his head again; not so high as of old, perhaps, but with a dignity that struck all whisperers dumb.

He did not finish out his duties at the exam., so rudely interrupted at the outset. Another man had to be found for that.

And who do you think was the winner of the great scholarship, after all?

Old Wilson! Up night after night, chasing round, sharing the Head's troubles, and looking after Bob, hanged if he didn't just scrape home top of the lists!

Nor was this the only wild excitement concerning the result. No sooner was St. Bartlemy's cheering itself hoarse over the news of Wilson's victory, than promptly came the bombshell that the silly old ass had refused to claim the prize!

"I simply couldn't, sir, after all that's happened," he told the Head. "You know what spiteful people must have said already over the exam. And now, when they hear that a boy of St. Bartlemy's came out the winner, they'll only let their evil tongues wag the more."

Dr. Mardon looked long at him.

"Do you really mean that, Wilson?" he said, with a break in his voice. "You're the son of a widowed mother, remember. This scholarship is your greatest and, perhaps, only chance in life. Besides, you won it absolutely fairly, as your own conscience knows."

Wilson, however, was firm as granite. Not one penny of it would he touch.

"Let the next man have it," he said doggedly. "I'll make my own way in the world."

But here a voice broke in, as determined as his own.

"Not on your life you won't!" it said, and Mr. Terence Adair entered the Head's library. For while his son was lying in the hospital, still hovering between life and death, Dr. Mardon had prevailed on him to make his house his home.

"If it's through anything done by me or mine that this young man is so nobly denying himself, then, whatever the scholarship is worth, you must come down on me to make it good, and more. No, I insist!" cried Mr. Terence Adair.

Nor would he take denial. So though the popular captain of St. Bartlemy's refused the well-won spoils, he did not suffer, after all.

And that brings us back to Bob Adair again.

He, when we last left him, was about to be released from the police-station on bail. For the arrest warrant, once issued, had to take its course in spite of Brian's confession.

This meant that Bob had yet to face

(*Concluded on page 35.*)

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FREE TRIAL.

Signed.....*Age*.....

Address .....

.....

SNUBBED BY THE SCHOOL.

(*Continued from page 24.*)

myself," muttered Locke. "I mean, the chap always looked straight enough to me——"

"Straight!" was the contemptuous echo. "It's a scandal his ever coming to Lavington at all! It ought never to have been allowed!" Glisson floundered into a rut, and floundered out again. "Wonder what Drummond will say when he hears of this?" he added, with a sneer. "Elmer and he have been such close pals since that Rugger affair——"

"Hallo," broke in Locke, "here's a cart of some sort! As you say, we'd better inquire."

It was a lumbering butt, with a single head-light, and the ancient driver of it pulled up to hear what they had to ask.

"I 'aven't passed nobody," began the old man; then—"stay a minnet, though. There was some sorter figger standin' by the gate to them path-fields a little way back—the fields leadin' across to Grocott. Don't know whether 'twas a man or a bye. But 'e seemed to be 'esitating, like, an' jest as I drew up 'e jumped over an' started across the meadow."

"Thanks!" cried Glisson; and they hurried on, making for the fields leading to Grocott.

Suddenly, as they neared a coppice, they caught a glimpse of a dim form before it vanished amongst the trees.

"That's Elmer!" panted Glisson. "This settles it; we must catch him now! Spread out, and go down on the right side, while I take the left. Be quick! He mustn't give us the slip!"

Together, they dived into the snow-laden gloom of the trees, working apart as they ran. Even here their footfalls were muffled, the only noise being caused by their contact with the scrubby growth.

Glisson, at fault for a minute, soon made out a greater crackling ahead of him. He trebled his pace, stumbling full upon his quarry almost before he knew it. His fingers closed on a coat-sleeve.

"Elmer!" he gasped. "You're collared!"

But the other was not to be so easily taken. He flung off the detaining grasp, and would have been clean away had not Glisson closed with him on the instant.

For a breath or so there was a blind tussle; then Glisson, catching his foot in a tangled tuft, went reeling backwards, finding himself asprawl in a snow-filled gully.

It cost him a scramble to get out again; and, although he did it swiftly, he could now hear no sound of Elmer's retreat. Had the other rushed fleetly away, or was he lurking near by, in hope that his pursuer would plunge on?

Even as Glisson asked himself this he was conscious of a stealthy rustle some few yards distant. He moved towards the spot with great caution, leaping swiftly. He stumbled over someone, and then a voice said loudly:

"Who is it? Stop——"

The voice was Locke's!

"Confound!" burst forth Glisson, rolling up. "That beggar has beaten us after all! He must be out of cover by now. Come on!"

Side by side, they made a straight dash down, coming through the fringing growth and so into the open.

There, gasping for breath, they paused. Before them was a broad patch of waste ground, fringed by the Grocott road. Opposite was the deep shadow of Grocott Woods, and sharply against that shadow the leaping blaze of a small fire.

In a moment or so the two boys took in the scene. They had come upon some sort of encampment. There were two or three caravans, and around the little fire they could now perceive the forms of several people.

"Gipsies!" spoke out Locke.

At that Glisson drew a deep breath.

"By George!" he whispered. "Could Elmer have known that they were here? If so, there was reason in his coming this way. No doubt they are—friends."

For a moment Locke did not speak.

"What shall we do?" he muttered at last. "Shall we——"

"Pooh, yes! Come on!"

Glisson strode towards the flickering fire, and faced a huge fellow in corduroys, with Locke a pace or so behind.

"We are looking for a boy named Elmer," stated Glisson clearly. "He is wanted on a charge of—theft. He managed to dodge us in the coppice yonder, and we wonder if you have seen anything of him?"

The man's deep-voiced reply was to the point.

"We've seen nobody," he declared.

Glisson braced himself for more.

"This fellow may be—a friend of yours," he added, with something of the old sneer. "There will be trouble if you're shielding him. I warn you of that."

The man's heavy features tightened.

"We're shielding nobody," he said.

Again the reply was crisp, but there was something about it now which warned Glisson that he had better try no further.

"Very well," he said, "we must take your word for it." And with the same, he turned on his heel and strode away, Locke by his side.

The men by the fire remained staring after them as they were once more swallowed up by the coppice, and as they stood so another figure came swiftly out from the deeper gloom of the wood.

It was Elmer.

Approaching the man to whom Glisson had spoken, he touched him on the arm, causing him to wheel briskly.

"Hallo! Another one! Who may you be?"

Elmer uttered a few words in a strange tongue. The man's whole attitude, at that, changed at once, and he drew the boy into the firelight.

There are more good qualities in the true gipsies—the Romanies—than a fellow like Glisson is ever likely to suppose. At all events, they are a clan—a brotherhood. And Elmer had found "friends."

CHAPTER V.
Drummond Confesses.

Two evenings later Drummond was well enough to return to his House. He went straight up to his study, intending presently to report himself, but before he could do so Mr. Grey looked in.

"Ah, Drummond, glad to see you back! How are you feeling?"

"Much better, sir, thank you!"

"That's right. Feel fit enough to take your place in preparation this evening?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

The master nodded. Drummond could see that something else was coming, and he prepared himself for the worse.

"About those sports subs.," went on Mr. Grey. "I don't want it to worry you, but something rather dreadful has happened. I discovered them to be about two pounds short; but, happily, no sort of doubt can be cast upon you. The thief is already known."

Drummond scarce restrained a gasp.

"Known, sir? Who——"

Mr. Grey told the whole story; Drummond listening in amazement. When the master had finished speaking, however, he somehow found his voice.

"And—and Elmer, sir? You've heard no more of him?"

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SNUBBED BY THE SCHOOL.

(Continued from the opposite page.)

"No. Inquiries, of course, are still being made. Glisson, as you've learnt, questioned a camping-party. It—you mayn't know of this—but it was rather an experiment Elmer's being accepted at Lavington, for he comes of just that wandering type of folk—in fact, gipsies! Inherits, I suppose, the thieving nature, and——"

Mr. Grey went on, but Drummond was not listening. Clearly enough, he remembered Elmer's parting words—"All that you need to do, no matter what you hear, is to keep absolutely silent!"

Drummond was hideously tempted. Elmer was gone; possibly back to his own people. After all, he had never had a chance of being happy at Lavington, and no doubt he would be much happier away from it. Why not accept the terrific sacrifice he had made by——

"A bad business, Drummond—very bad," Mr. Grey was saying; "still, there it is! The boys don't know the truth about it yet. I must tell them."

Drummond opened his mouth; but before he could speak the master was gone.

Drummond went through agonies during the short interval before the bell for preparation rang. Collecting his books, he went slowly down to the common-room, and his reappearance there was greeted with a rousing cheer. Drummond, despite his friendship with Elmer, had always been popular with his fellows.

Drummond tried to work, but all the time this thing which had happened was throbbing in his brain. The clock struck eight at last, and then, unexpectedly, Mr. Grey appeared.

"One moment, boys," began the master. "I know you have all been puzzling over the mysterious disappearance of Elmer—only the monitors knew the facts about it, and, at my request, they have kept silent. However, as Elmer remains untraced, I will now tell you exactly what happened. Briefly, dishonesty was at the root of it. We find that Elmer helped himself to a matter of two pounds from another boy's study."

There was a sensation in the room; and then suddenly all the bad feeling against Elmer resolved itself into a growing hiss.

"Silence, please!" demanded Mr. Grey. "Elmer's act was an especially mean one, for he took advantage of Drummond's illness to break open the sports box——"

Then Drummond's manliness asserted itself. He got swiftly upon his feet.

"Stop, sir!" he cried. "Please, listen to what I've got to say. Elmer was not the thief—he was not! It was I who took the money!"

There was a gasp in the room, and a great wave of movement. Drummond, dead-white, knew that every eye was fixed upon him. But he staunchly stood his ground.

Mr. Grey himself seemed petrified.

"You? My good boy, but why should Elmer——"

"He did it to shield me, sir! It was to give me time to pay back what I had taken. It was simply a plan to save me!"

Then Drummond, standing there before them all, told out everything. How Elmer must have taken the slip of paper from the study desk, broken it up, and transferred it to his own drawer.

The master stood aghast.

"To me it is amazing!" he stammered. "The boy's whole heart was in his school-work; in six months he has gone up two forms. Would any boy sacrifice as much as this——"

"Elmer would, sir! The whole House has despised him, snubbed him; but he's worth any six of us. He must be found, sir—he——"

"Yes, yes, Drummond. But this excitement won't do for you. Go quietly to my study and sit down a bit; I will come and speak to you there. Still, I quite agree in what you say—Elmer must be found!"

Several days passed before Elmer was traced, and when he came back to Lavington he found the whole feeling of Grey's House changed towards him.

After all, he had saved Drummond; for it was made clear that Drummond's offence received pardon solely as a tribute to the huge sacrifice which Elmer had been prepared to make. And all were agreed—no matter what else they thought—that one who could do as much as that for a friend was hardly a fellow to be snubbed or sneered at.

THE END.

THE SCOURGE OF THE SCHOOL.

(Concluded from page 32.)

the terrible ordeal of appearing in the police-court dock. And terrible it would have been had not about eighty young rebels—headed by Fennell, needless to say—coolly broke out of school that morning, and come down to cheer him with their presence.

The little court was crammed with Eton-jacketed urchins, with white, wide collars, and eager, anxious faces.

Never were men so astonished as the magistrates, when they filed on to the bench and looked about them. For there were boys of St. Bartlemy's packed like crows up in the gallery, and behind the jury box, and down in the "well," in every corner, in fact, where they could squeeze their bullet heads.

Bob's dad was there, of course, and so was Molly, whom all St. Bartlemy's vowed was the prettiest lass that ever was seen.

At last, after two or three "drunks and disorderlies" had been fined and disposed of, Bob's name was called, and promptly he appeared in the dock.

He was very pale and wide-eyed, and as he gripped the spiked rail before him, they noticed how the ten knuckles of his clenched fists stood out like marbles.

Still, it was only a matter of form, of course. The charge of letter-box thieving on which he had been arrested was unreservedly withdrawn. The prisoner, as the chairman of the magistrates said, would leave the court without the suspicion of a stain on his character.

You ought to have heard the yell that went up then from all the jolly young Bartlemians. In vain the usher roared for "order," and the magistrates proclaimed it as scandalous. They didn't really mean it. In fact, they were all grinning themselves just as badly as anyone else.

Such cheers, such handshakings, and such hopeless "giving the show away" for such a starchy, high-toned school as old St. Bartlemy's! Nobody seemed to care two straws, in fact, what sort of an ass he made of himself.

The eighty young rebels all went scrumming out of the court together in a whooping mob. Then outside they formed up, and marched back through the town, singing songs of triumph.

Bob did not return to the school that day or the next. So long as his cousin's life hung on a thread, he insisted on being near his bedside to comfort him.

That he forgave Brian for all the cruel wrong he had done him, goes without saying. In fact, he never seemed to realise that he had anything to forgive. Such simple charity touched his uncle's heart more than anything.

"Mike," he told Bob's dad once, "if anything does happen, and my own boy is taken from me, I want you to promise to let me look after young Bob from this time on. And, more than that, to let all my fortune go to him after my death.

"But if Brian lives," he went on, "and mercy grant that he may, if only to repent, then Bob and he shall share and share alike. You'll say 'yes' to that, won't you, for old sake's sake?"

Bob's pater wouldn't do anything of the sort, as a matter of fact. Still, Uncle Terence had his own way all the same.

Brian Adair did recover at last after a terrible illness. But he never appeared at St. Bartlemy's again.

Bob, however, showed up again in due course, and—well, talk about a royal homecoming, "royal" is altogether too mild a word. It was thunderous.

Needless to say, it was an ordeal for Bob. But, all the same, it served to show him that even in that brief interval a new and healthier era had dawned for St. Bartlemy's.

The once neglected footer fields teemed with life again; the gym. was in full swing. No longer did one come suddenly on fags round corners conning the racing news with bulging eyes, or fumbling greasy packs of cards or half-smoked cigarettes into inside pockets.

Those days were done with, for good and all, it was to be hoped. Healthier and happier ones were in store.

The Scourge of the School was stamped out!

THE END.

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